the weekly
Standard

JUNE 24, 1996 $2.95

Bruce Babbitt, Neo-Puritan

SINS OF EMISSION

by Robert H. Nelson

Why Europe Has Lost Its Cachet
DAVID BROOKS

Dick Morris and the Feminists
NOEMIE EMERY

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An Open Letter to the House GOP Leadership

The agreement [between the government and the Laborers] is almost universally regarded as the most potent and potentially effective cleanup effort undertaken by the Justice Department since such efforts began under Robert Kennedy 30 years ago. To seek to use this for political purposes is a disservice to the incredibly hard work that went into achieving this resolution.

— Justice Department Spokesman Carl Stern

Dear Members of the House Republican Leadership:

The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime is gearing up for hearings on the Oversight Agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice and the Laborers' International Union of North America, under which we are aggressively and systematically cleaning up corruption in our union.

We welcome the spotlight on our efforts to rid our union of organized crime elements and to institute democratic reforms. In fact, we are planning a series of briefings for Members of Congress and their staffs to explain the genesis of the Oversight Agreement, what it means for our union, and the significant progress that has been made in just 16 months.

What we object to is a blatantly partisan campaign to discredit the Oversight Agreement because of our endorsement of President Clinton — made after a poll of our members found that 77 percent support his reelection — and our pledge to defeat Members of Congress who do not support the interests of working families.

The Oversight Agreement is, in the words of Attorney General Janet Reno, "innovative and far-reaching." It was negotiated primarily by career Justice Department prosecutors and represented a total *victory* for the government.

On the same day the Oversight Agreement was signed, we signed a Consent Decree giving the Justice Department every key point of relief it wanted. The government is free to pull the plug on the Oversight Agreement and implement the Consent Decree unilaterally if it ever decides that our reform program is making insufficient progress.

The government is saving millions of taxpayer dollars, because the Laborers' anti-corruption operation is doing the job. Under the direction of former prosecutors and FBI agents with complete and independent authority, more than 300 investigations have been launched; 46 officials have been terminated, forced to resign, disciplined or charged; four local affiliate elections have been overturned due to improprieties; and six local unions and district councils have been placed under trusteeship.

We suggest that in the current politically supercharged atmosphere on Capitol Hill, it is unrealistic to expect the Judiciary Subcommittee to be able to conduct a serious, objective, in-depth investigation of our union, its reform efforts and the Oversight Agreement. Even if that is the desire, the inflammatory and intentionally inaccurate comments of Speaker Gingrich and Republican Conference Chairman Boehner make that impossible. Hearings guided by substance, not partisan political calculations, can take place only after the elections.

Do the public and the media really need another partisan sideshow like the 10-day hearings on Waco? The President's critics furiously tried to find a political motivation for the Waco siege. But in the end, no evidence whatsoever was found to show the President had any involvement.

Hearings that attempt to link our union's support of the President to the Oversight Agreement worked out between us and the Justice Department are simply wrong and will easily lead to the circus-like atmosphere that characterized the Waco hearings.

Indeed, to taint with politics the accomplishments of the Justice Department and the Laborers' Union in fighting corruption sets a dangerous precedent, could threaten to embolden corrupt union members who are under attack by our team of former prosecutors and FBI agents, and would be a clear misuse of congressional authority and taxpayer dollars for partisan ends.

The Oversight Agreement is good for the government, good for taxpayers and good for the 750,000 members of the Laborers' Union. If Congress reviews the facts of this case open and honestly, you most assuredly will come to the same view. We urge you to do so in an atmosphere free of political bomb-throwing. That way you will avoid embarrassment and will bring credit to yourselves and to the people you represent, including our members.

THE GENERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA

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the weekly
Standard

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Mr. Livingstone, We Presume

A Clintonite hack who brags of having infiltrated Republican campaigns and passed material on to his fellow Democrats is the most interesting, and shadowy, figure in the new FBI Filegate mess.

Filegate is the name being given to the improper search of 340-odd FBI background reports on Reagan and Bush White House officials by aides in the Clinton White House, and it was begun on orders from White House personnel security director Craig Livingstone. Livingstone asked his friend Anthony Marceca, who was brought to the White House from the Pentagon, to begin retrieving the files from the FBI. The files remained in Livingstone's control for at least a year, it appears. And his background makes it difficult to believe that this was the "completely honest, bureaucratic snafu" President Clinton claims it was—not to mention making you wonder how he could have resisted the temptation to examine some of them. James A. Baker III's, for example, or Marlin Fitzwater's.

Before the 1992 campaign, Livingstone worked on the campaigns of Geraldine Ferraro, Gary Hart, and Al Gore. In a May 1994 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* profile, Livingstone was described by a business acquaintance as "real businesslike and pleasant but I wouldn't want to be on his bad side." More telling, he spent some time in 1988 working as a Democratic spy on the Bush/Quayle effort. Livingstone claims to have told top Democrats that Quayle was planning to compare his record in the Senate to John Kennedy's during his debate with Lloyd Bentsen. That, of course, sparked Bentsen's famous response—"Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy"—for which, if you believe Livingstone's account, his surreptitious intelligence was responsible.

In the intervening years, Livingstone's self-described employment ranged from doing public relations for an Atlantic City casino and the controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ* to teaching democratic politics to Angolan guerrilla soldiers. In the 1992 campaign, Livingstone did advance work for Gore, and he worked with Clinton friend Harry Thomason during the inauguration. Not really the kind of credentials one usually looks for in a personnel security chief, one of the more sensitive jobs in the White House. Or, at least, not in the kind of White House Bill Clinton promised—the most ethical in history, he said during the transition. Remember?

And Speaking of Filegate . . .

As a man chokes when forced to speak of something he'd rather avoid, the *New York Times* is having a deuce of a time reporting on the Clinton administration's misuse of the FBI. On June 13, it published a story headed "Most F.B.I. Files Received by Clinton White House Summarized Background Inquiries." This was a curious headline. First, its accuracy was questionable—the facts in the case are far from established. Second, it bore almost no relation to the article that followed.

The sixth paragraph mentioned that, while the FBI normally holds "raw files," "summaries sent to the White House could contain references to any issue discovered" during investigations. The nineteenth paragraph asserted that, "in cases of major appointments," "only summaries of the inquiries are provided to the White House." But other than these two mentions, the piece had nothing to do with the question of whether the FBI files searched inside the Clinton White House contained summaries and summaries only. And a good thing too, because we don't *know* what exactly was in the files.

There was also the following bald statement: "The files at issue were assembled for a different purpose [than criminal or national-security concerns], to help Presidential aides evaluate whether a person should be allowed regular access to the White House." That is simply the White House spin, reported as though it were truth, without qualification. Reporter David Johnston knows better than that.

"The issue," he noted, "has been a painful one for President Clinton who has struggled to move beyond the reach of issues like Whitewater and the firing of White House travel office employees." Somehow, we find it harder than Johnston to feel the president's pain in this instance.

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Scrapbook

Pedophilia Chic, Part II

The mainstreaming of pedophilia advances so quickly that it's already time for an update on last week's cover story by Mary Eberstadt, "Pedophilia Chic." This month Harcourt Brace & Company publishes *Homosexuality in History*, by Colin Spencer. After detailing the ways in which pedophilia was ritualized in primitive (read: progressive) cultures, Spencer goes all moralistic on us:

"Societies have failed to create an acknowledged method by which the biological extravagance of semen in the young male can be dissipated in an enjoyable and harmless way. . . . Previously, magisters guided youths, often with desire and affection, but church and state combined to erase such roles, deeming them a wicked influence. . . . I believe we reap the harvest of our hysterical fear and homophobia today in juvenile crime, drug use, and delinquency." Now this *is* creative: pederasty as a crime-fighting strategy!

And from the *Times Literary Supplement* comes word of a new literary 'zine (as they don't say at *TLS*) called *London Quarterly*. The premiere issue's lead article is a grudging defense of Thomas Hamilton, the murderer of 16 children and their teacher in Dunblane, Scotland. Hamilton, you may recall, was an outcast in his community, owing to his undue affection for young boys. "Hamilton's paranoia seems to have had some cause," writes *London Quarterly*'s editor. "Hamilton was a man who committed a human act, and who did so as a consequence of events within his community, as well as of events within his head." The editor even refers to "Hamilton's Peter Pan-like qualities." Given the current climate, *London Quarterly* may go far.

Sandel-lot Baseball

Nietzsche warned us about the Last Man, who settles for comfortable bourgeois morality because he lacks the thymotic urge for recognition and greatness, but we didn't expect that when he came he would coach Little League. The *New York Times*, however, in its effort to discover America, made it all the way to Brookline, Mass., and there it found him. Michael Sandel—the Harvard communitarian who recently came out with a brow-furrowed book, *Democracy's Discontents*—is coaching the Phillies.

We'll let the *Times*'s equally earnest Sara Rimer take it from here: "There are no stars on the Phillies. No one sits on the bench. Everyone plays at least two innings. Michael, Henry, Adam, Ari, Siobahn, Paulo, Elizabeth, Benjamin, Joey, Jared, Diego and the two Roberts are a team [What? No Confucian kids?]. The coach, Michael Sandel, does not give prizes for individual heroics, a home run, say, or a double play. But if a player backs up a teammate in the field and makes an out, then Mr. Sandel rewards the entire team with Snickers bars. . . . The coach, who grew up in Minneapolis playing sandlot ball and is known to his players as Michael, has certain rules: Never criticize the opposing team. Never criticize the umpire. Always cheer your team on." The Phillies are undefeated this year, but without individual achievement, competition, and pressure to excel, somehow winning just doesn't seem worth it.

We're Actually Sorry

During an interview with The Weekly Standard on May 20, Joseph Trento, a reporter with the National Security News Service, stated that his organization had helped prepare news stories for the *Wall Street Journal*. Subsequent inquiries have yielded no evidence that Mr. Trento or his organization at any time assisted the *Wall Street Journal*. The Weekly Standard regrets printing Mr. Trento's claim.

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Casual

List Envy

Yes, yes, *yes*! I made the list. *The* list.

Excuse my excitement, but I hadn't expected to be, shall we say, included. The first news reports I heard, on CNN, said that the Clinton administration had released a list containing the names of "prominent Republicans"—340 in all—whose secret FBI files had been sought and reviewed by the White House. CNN mentioned, specifically, the names James Baker, Marlin Fitzwater, and Tony Blankley.

Now, I had worked—briefly but not, alas, briefly enough—in the Bush White House. But I'm not a Republican and I'm not prominent, although I am personal friends with Fred Barnes. I soon learned, of course, that the White House list, quickly dubbed the "Clinton enemies list," contained mostly the names of unprominent Bush staffers. I qualified! So it wasn't a complete shock, merely a pleasant surprise, when I checked my voicemail last Monday morning and heard the shout of a former White House colleague: "Congratulations! You made the list!"

I noticed an edge to my friend's voice—one that became increasingly familiar to me as the week wore on. Beneath his chipper good wishes (sincere enough, I suppose) was unmistakable evidence of a psychological disease that has gripped Our Nation's Capital: list envy.

My friend, God love him, hadn't made the list. Neither had Haley Barbour, who went public, unashamedly, with his own list envy. "I'm hurt," he told *The Hill* newspaper, voicing the desperate hope that maybe his folder had simply been misfiled. Ha. He should be so lucky.

As the world now knows, the list stops mysteriously at the letter "G." If you are, say, a Johnson, or a Rickenbacker, or a Smith—no matter how hard you labored for George Bush, no matter how juicy your FBI file—you, perforce, aren't on the list. And even more mysteriously, many Bushies and Reaganites with names in the A to G range aren't on the list either.

Thus the list lists Jean Balestrieri, Bill Bennett's receptionist when he was drug czar, but not David Bates, Bush's cabinet secretary. It omits Spencer Abraham, a top aide to Dan Quayle and now a rising Republican star in the Senate, but includes . . . well, me. Try as we might, no one has yet devised a unified field theory to explain the bizarre omissions and inclusions.

Not that I'm trying all that hard. I'm too busy just being a guy who made the list. It's almost a full-time job: fielding phone calls from distant friends, soaking up the admiration of family members and coworkers, consoling former colleagues stricken with list envy, and acting shy and confused to inquiring reporters. Aren't you outraged? they ask. Have you considered filing a lawsuit? No, no, I tell them, I just feel so . . . so *violated*.

Those of us on the list have a duty, it seems to me, to maintain our humility, and our dignity. At least in public. In my private moments, I have contrived a theory, not to say fantasy, as to how the list came to be.

I think back to 1993, when the requests to the FBI were apparently made. Is it any coincidence that at precisely the same time, I was working for *Washingtonian* magazine, writing several pieces that—if I do say so myself—were none too flattering to the new administration? An example: my hard-hitting exposé on the pizza-ordering habits of the Clinton White House. Staffers for previous administrations, working late into the night, had been content to call lowly Domino's for a plebe pepperoni with extra cheese. Not this Chablis-and-camembert crowd. The Clintonites, I discovered, were ordering pizzas from a fancy-pants bistro in the Palisades, topped with pesto chicken and goat cheese. I blew the lid off that story. My piece was a scorcher, confirming the image of a White House out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Americans who go to work every day, play by the rules, and eat pepperoni.

It is not difficult for me to imagine the scene that ensued in the Oval Office, with Clinton angrily hurling the new issue of *Washingtonian* across the room.

He turned to Bernie Nussbaum, I think. "Bernie, this bastard at the *Washingtonian* is tearing the bark off us month after month," the president shouted in a flash of his famous temper, maybe. "Will no one rid me of this meddlesome hack?"

"We could get his FBI file, dig up some dirt," Bernie said, probably. "Then throw in a bunch of other names, just to mess with their minds—Baker, Fitzwater . . ."

"And that receptionist in Bennett's office: what's-her-name," Clinton said. "We could do it. But it would be wrong."

Chuckle-chuckle.

Bernie turned to go. "And maybe Barbour too?"

"Nah," Clinton said, I'm almost sure. "Screw 'im."

Eat your heart out, Haley.

Andrew Ferguson

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Financing Elections... As If Democracy Mattered

Remember when democracy was something you believed in, not something for sale?

Those days have come . . . and gone.

Big money from big campaign contributors has put a price tag on our democracy. Our fundamental principles – like a government accountable to the people – are undermined as candidates collect millions of campaign dollars from rich people and organizations with specific and special interests. When the election's over, the donors collect. Fancy dinners. Private briefings. Special favors. Subsidies. Tax breaks.

No wonder average Americans are angry. Democracy is supposed to be about empowering all the people, not just the people with money. Political equality and government accountability are the values that inspire our faith in democracy. America's history is the history of our progress toward making these goals real for every citizen. These same values should inspire efforts to reform campaign financing.

Americans want real reform – not empty promises. But not all the proposed reforms in Congress and in state legislatures across the country will solve the problem.

How will we recognize real campaign finance reform?

The Center for Responsive Politics presents four essential "guideposts" for reform. Keep these in mind when you hear lawmakers talk about campaign finance reform. Real campaign finance reform will:

ENHANCE COMPETITION

– Allow qualified Americans of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to seek public office regardless of their personal wealth or their access to wealth.

RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

– Eliminate the inevitable conflicts of interest created when big money buys elections and the special interest replaces the public interest.

ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS

– Provide all Americans access to their government and their elected representatives regardless of their ability to make campaign contributions.

STOP THE MONEY CHASE

– Place the people's business first by freeing elected public servants from the money chase that distracts them from the responsibilities of governing.

Campaign finance reform . . . as if democracy mattered. Because it does.

The Center for Responsive Politics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization in Washington, DC that studies the role of money in politics. For a reprint of this essay and our handbook, call 1-800-653-2129.

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Likud is the Party of Peace

Thank you for David Bar-Illan's "A Vote for Realism" (June 10). I believe Likud is the only real party for peace. If Israel is to make peace with its neighbors, it will have to be done in a fashion whereby Israel is guaranteed security, not by the Americans, but by Israelis themselves.

During the past couple of administrations, the United States has put enormous pressure on Israel to come to the table and discuss peace. Despite being the only true democracy in the region, Israel was pushed harder to make more concessions than the terrorists (e.g., PLO) or those regimes sponsoring terrorism (e.g., Syria) that were sitting at the table in Madrid.

As the president of the greatest nation on earth, Bill Clinton had a responsibility to stay neutral and give his support not to any party or individual politician, but to the cause of peace and stability in the Middle East.

It is absurd to think that peace can be bought. People either have a desire to live in peace or they don't. They either respect their neighbors' right to exist or they don't. The right to live in one's country without fear of terrorism seems pretty basic. Human sacrifices are casualties of war; they should never be casualties of peace.

DORIT MOSKOVICH
NEW YORK, NY

Statists Alive and Well

Irwin M. Stelzer's "Europe's Welfare States: Dead and Kicking" (June 10) gives an accurate description of how the economies of the European Union will be damaged and how this will harm America's economy.

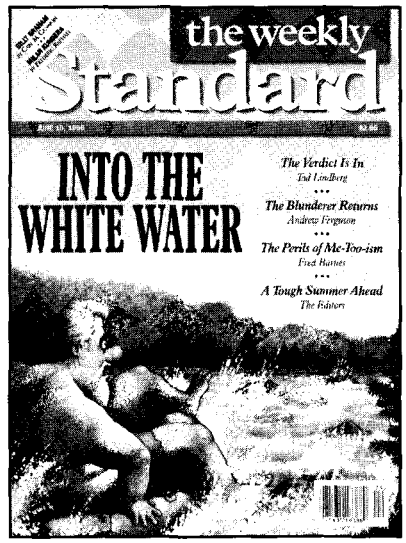
But he is wrong when he writes that American policymakers ignore this because they hope "that a United States of Europe will be just like the United States of America—free-trading, free-market oriented, driven to full employment by the efforts of relatively low-taxed entrepreneurs operating in flexible labor and product markets."

American statists don't suffer from such a notion. They know that a squeeze caused by a cutoff of American exports to Europe and a flood of Asian imports to America will cause a loss of jobs, allowing them to call for protectionism and greater power to the welfare state. They don't hope Europe will be transformed into America. They hope America will transformed into Europe.

WILLIAM VAN NEST
WAYNE, NJ

Bill Wants a Cracker

In "The Perils of Me-Too-ism" (June 10), Fred Barnes is right on in his observations of Bill Clinton's wily ways. Barnes is outdone, however, by Michael Ramirez and his political cartoon, which is worth, as the saying



goes, a thousand words. Why was Bill the parrot behind bars and not just on an open perch? Perhaps another appropriate image would have been a female parrot in the same cage squawking "Paula wants a cracker."

DON KIRCHE
SARANAC LAKE, NY

Billy Graham's Example

Carl M. Cannon's "The Decency of Billy Graham: An Education" (June 10) was a beautiful essay.

To see a man who has lived in the world's spotlight for so many years still walking and talking with God is nothing short of magnificent. In a world so full of cardboard people, it gives me renewed faith that God is still in charge.

BETTY ROBERTSON
MIAMI SPRINGS, FL

Jonathan Edwards was no "full-time traveling evangelist," contrary to what Carl M. Cannon suggests.

It is true that during the Awakening of the early 1740s Edwards preached up and down the Connecticut River Valley, including in the town of Enfield, where he delivered his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Still, he had been a minister in Northampton, Mass., since 1730 and would remain so until dismissed by the congregation in 1751.

ALAN C. EMDIN
BROOKLYN, NY

While Carl M. Cannon painted an informative portrait of the Rev. Billy Graham, one detail needs correcting.

Cannon notes that William Randolph Hearst's famous 1949 directive to "Puff Graham" was "issued from his San Simeon castle." However Pharaonic the image of Hearst manipulating national news from his eccentric mansion, Hearst actually issued his edict from 1007 North Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills. As historian David Reid notes in his essay "The Possessed," collected in *Sex, Death and God in L.A.*, Hearst had ceased living in San Simeon two years earlier on doctor's orders.

PAUL KARL LUKACS
BERKELEY, CA

Big Brother Adoption

Have you read the federal adoption bill you are promoting ("More Adoption Nonsense," Scrapbook, June 10)? It's pure big government. It intervenes in family life by making it illegal to discriminate in placement decisions on the basis of national origin, race, or color. Can religion be far behind? Deval Patrick at the Justice Department will have veto power over every adoption and foster-care placement in the country.

Prospective parents won't have their wishes taken into account, lest the agency they work through face federal fines and lawsuits. Mothers who give

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up their children won't be allowed to request a certain type of adoptive parent, thereby increasing the likelihood of abortion. Lawyers will go nuts filing lawsuits and throwing legal wrenches into the adoption process. Ironically, even the first lady's desire to adopt a non-white child will not be accommodated if this law passes: She would be "discriminating" on grounds of race.

This law represents a very dangerous intrusion into the family. It's a law only a liberal could support. It's no surprise that Howard Metzenbaum was the first to introduce it.

JEFFREY TUCKER
AUBURN, AL

KUNDERA'S TRAGIC VISION

Frederic Raphael truly appreciates the aesthetics of French sodomy, and his insights into the difficulties the demise of the Hapsburg Empire presented for postimperial cultural critics show that he has an eye for the witty and the intertextual ("Kundera Goes French," June 10). But it is a fatal flaw in a review of any work by Milan Kundera to treat it with anything less than moral seriousness, since it is only for the serious that Kundera ultimately writes.

Raphael's only critique of Kundera's novel *Slowness* is that the end of communism has taken away his "raison d'être." In fact, Kundera's works are replete with moral insights that, though often occasioned by "the crassness of Communist authorities," are not limited to it.

Since the only other work of Kundera's that Raphael mentions is his 1965 novel *The Joke*, let us use it as an example. The received view had been that this was basically an anti-Communist tract. The fact that Kundera rewrote the English translation in 1992, after the fall of communism, indicates that at least he believed the work to be still relevant, presenting a problem for the received view.

This view, parroted by Raphael, is demolished when one finds passages like these: "I was horrified at the thought that things conceived in error are just as real as things conceived with good reason and of necessity. . . . If history really has its own reason, why should that reason care about human understanding?" This is not mere ironic anti-communism, an attempt to show "the absurdity of trying to be 'serious' in an absurd society," as Raphael claims. It is instead reflective of the same tragic insight perceived by, among others, Sophocles, Epicurus, and Heidegger, that much of our lives is determined by the unplanned, the irrational, the luck of the draw.

Kundera's response to the whimsicality of fate is complex enough to merit an extended discussion in a review of his works. The review by Raphael, however, was frankly unfair to the seriousness of Kundera's moral vision, and is little better than a crude joke.

FREDERICK C. KELLY
NOTRE DAME, IN

Frederic Raphael's torturously labored explanation of the name "Vivant Denon" in his review is just chi-chi interpretation.

Dominique Vivant Denon (1747-1825) really did exist and was a man of some accomplishment. He was an engraver and later in his career in charge of the brigade of artists and archaeologists Napoleon Bonaparte took along on the expedition to Egypt. Denon was appointed by Napoleon director general of French museums. His engravings and drawings have been collected in several editions during the last 200 years and are highly regarded by art historians.

Above the old main entrance of the Louvre, "Porte Denon" is chiseled across the lintel. Just above this entry is the Salle Denon which leads into the Salle des Etats where hangs the Mona Lisa—observations Raphael might have made in one of his many visits to Paris.

MARY KIMBROUGH
ROCKPORT, TX

ALTER GOOD BOY

"Gotcha"? Okay, you "got" me, if getting me means selectively quoting from two different columns three years apart ("Alter Bad Boy," Scrapbook, June 3). I didn't give *Newsweek* a "bye" on Admiral Boorda's suicide, and if you don't believe me, ask Col. David Hackworth.

I said we all felt sick about it, and we should. I also said that we did not bear responsibility for Boorda's suicide, which is the same thing I said about the *Wall Street Journal* and Vincent Foster in 1993, if you bothered to read the piece. My point about the *Journal* editorial page was that it had indeed hounded Foster for months, blaming him for every manner of sin, including those for which he bore no responsibility at all, like promoting Zoe Baird.

You were appalled that I wrote that editorial page editor Robert Bartley should lose a bit of sleep over Foster's suicide and reflect on the power of the press. But that is precisely what I said *Newsweek* should do in the wake of the Boorda suicide, though in that case we had not hounded Boorda—or published anything about him.

I think a little tossing and turning would do us all some good. Don't you?

JONATHAN ALTER
NEW YORK, NY

SUPPRESSING RONALD RADOSH

In his article "The Suppression of Ronald Radosh" (June 10), Peter Collier attributes to me a statement I did not make. I did not say, "What's the story? He wasn't qualified." I would not comment publicly in this fashion about the qualifications of any applicant for any position. What I did say was: "A guy applied for a job and didn't get it. I don't see why this is a story."

CYNTHIA HARRISON
WASHINGTON, DC

PETER COLLIER RESPONDS: ***I have double-checked my notes of our conversation, and what Professor Harrison says she said does not accord with what I heard her say.***

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Our tax code rewards short-term speculation while punishing long-term investment.

We constantly hear liberals using their Marxist philosophy to bash the wealthy and business. Liberals claim capital gains punish only worthless speculators. The loss of American jobs to cheaper foreign labor is due solely to the business' greed. Nothing could be further from the truth. The real culprits are our greedy, tax-hungry politicians and their tax code.

The IRS rewards Hillary while reducing job growth.

Virtually every electronic product you own, from TVs to VCRs, were designed and patented here, then licensed to non-US companies to manufacture. Labor costs and regulations are apparent hurdles. But efficient manufacturing — capital improvements — still wins this race.

But our capital improvements are hobbled. Our tax code discriminates against investment and long-term risk. Short-term income is rewarded by allowing full deductions for expenses and indexing for inflation. This rewards deals like Hillary's cattle futures speculation—which created *no* jobs—while discouraging long-term capital investments that put people to work.

Using the consumer price index, $100,000 invested in 1980 breaks even at $250,000 today, after inflation. Unlike Hillary's, this *entire* inflation gain is treated as profit!

Liberals' Marxism undermines American industry.

After 40 years of punishing invested capital, liberal Marxist tax philosophy has reduced our economic growth rates by more than 50 percent. Forced two paycheck families. Reduced the standard of living throughout Europe. Condemned Russia to poverty. Only government benefits, while poverty spending and welfare recipients balloon. Prior to WWII, 20 percent of the US civil work force were government employees; today, 33 percent are.

Our government has become the single greatest debtor in the world and all we have to show is unfunded liabilities, more public servants, and billions of new regulations. With the help of all this bureaucracy, social values have declined, crime has soared, and government psychologists still have not improved on the simplicity of the 10 Commandments.

Tax reform, not tinkering or cuts, is *the* issue of substance.

While liberals rant and rave about wealth, they ignore the devastation Marxist economics has inflicted on the lower and middle classes. In 1960, the American family paid 25 percent of their income in taxes; now nearly 40 percent. More than 60 percent of our national debt is interest costs, *not* social benefits. The rate of increase in government spending is twice that of the economy!

We are near the Armageddon betwen liberal Marxism and sound economic policy. History warns that social decay always follows economic decay. We better start listening.

For more information on the Princeton Proposal for tax reform & economic growth, contact:

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the weekly Standard

The White House's FBI Blunder

The good news is that Whitewater special counsel Kenneth Starr is now looking into the circumstances under which the Clinton White House improperly secured and reviewed highly confidential background information from the FBI on more than 400 Reagan- and Bush-administration employees. A full accounting of this atrocious invasion of privacy may eventually become public.

But the bad news is that, in the meantime, the whole story is being set up to disappear. A separate FBI analysis of the "Filegate" caper has now been released. It is highly critical of the entire enterprise—which seems to have victimized 71 more individuals than had previously been identified. But the FBI inquiry does not address the question of White House conduct. Were Clinton's aides on a dirt-digging expedition? Those aides continue to maintain, in the president's words, that "it was just an innocent bureaucratic snafu": computer glitches and procedural carelessness, with no malign intent and no disclosure of personal information. In short: no harm, no foul.

No way.

The controversy began with the revelation that in December 1993, Clinton political appointees requisitioned more than 30 years of FBI security reports on Billy Dale, telling the Bureau that Dale was "being considered for access" to the White House complex of offices. Very fishy: This came seven months *after* that poor man had been falsely accused of embezzlement and summarily fired from his job as White House travel office chief. Dale's "access" to the White House was already a dead letter. As was "access" for at least 300 Reagan- and Bush-era staffers, files on whose private lives had, it soon turned out, also been retrieved from the FBI.

After an initial flurry of typically angry (and inaccurate) denials about this misdeed, the White House damage-control operation has coughed up a novel excuse: It's all George Bush's fault. Here's Clinton/Gore deputy campaign manager Ann Lewis, in a how-to-confuse-the-issue advisory memo addressed to "friends": "Because the Bush administration had removed all existing personnel security files, including those for holdover employees, the Clinton administration needed to recreate those files for employees who continued to have access." We are now asked to believe that, in pursuit of this unobjectionable mission, Clinton personnel-security officials inadvertently used an obsolete Secret Service computer listing of people with current and regular business in the White House. All those retired Republicans among them.

It's a hard tale to swallow. The permanent White House employees alleged to have provided the president's men with this list surely did not think it comprised only low-level, non-political holdovers. The list, which inexplicably stops at the letter "G," includes two former White House chiefs of staff, two former presidential press secretaries, and innumerable former Republican aides—most of whose names would be instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with daily White House operations. Moreover, the A to G list is incomplete; several prominent Reagan and Bush staffers aren't on it. It contains several glaring misspellings. And the files the list generated seem to have been reviewed not by FBI agents stationed at the White House, as normal rules would dictate, but by a former Democratic campaign staffer now on the Defense Department payroll, a man instructed by unnamed higher-ups to search for and report on "derogatory" data.

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen reassures his readers that there is no need for Congress to look into this matter. "I already have," he says. And? "I can recognize only a few names" on the list; the rest are "the sort of anonymous people who work day in and day out for the federal government."

So in other words, only really famous people need worry that their financial, medical, and other secrets might have been rummaged through by a legendarily paranoid band of high-placed political hacks. Bill Clinton, Cohen comforts us, is a "big, drooling Saint Bernard" of a man, much too nice to permit an "enemies list" vendetta.

Maybe so. But maybe not. A 26-year veteran of the FBI who retired from his White House post in 1995

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has now alleged, in the *Wall Street Journal*, that Clinton political appointees manipulated the Bureau's regular security procedures to protect favored colleagues—and punish career employees suspected of disloyalty. Whatever the ultimate truth, based on what has already been revealed, there's reason to demand that President Clinton—who once promised the "most ethical" White House in history—fire those members of his staff who are responsible for this travesty. And, unfortunately, there's little reason to expect he will. ♦

Dole's Abortion Blunder

In the six days from June 6 to June 11, Bob Dole engineered not one but two astonishing developments in internal Republican abortion politics. On the seventh day he rested, sitting square in the middle of the resulting rubble. It is not clear how he will get back up.

On Thursday, June 6, it looked as though Mr. Dole had accomplished the impossible: mollifying the GOP's pro-life and pro-choice camps with subtle diplomacy concerning their ritualized, bitter dispute over the party platform's abortion plank. During interviews with ABC and CNN, Dole restated his commitment to the pro-life cause; later in the day, his campaign announced that Dole would not "seek or accept retreat" on the question at the upcoming San Diego convention. Just the same, Dole said he welcomed the support of pro-choice voters, and the next day's newspapers reported that he would endorse new, penumbral language in the platform acknowledging that the party was home to broadly divergent views.

Okay, said the GOP's strongest voices on abortion, pro and con. And they stayed okay for the next four days, pleased over the possibility of a relatively peaceful convention at which each side might claim a symbolically meaningful victory. But on Monday, June 10, Mr. Dole began to undo his own skilled handiwork, telling CNN that the platform's forthcoming "big tent" phraseology was "not negotiable" and would probably be attached specifically to the abortion plank. Faced with the prospect of a platform in which abortion, alone among subjects, would be singled out for nice-making ambiguity, pro-life leaders issued unhappy warnings. Pro-choice Republicans like Pete Wilson and Bill Weld were emboldened to demand further concessions. And the next day, Dole poured gasoline on this emerging fire, with a direct and irritable televised attack on his pro-life critics, who now threaten to mount a full-scale convention battle over the platform—and maybe sit the election out.

The mainstream media, always dense with disdain for those who see and proclaim the evil of abortion clearly, discern a risky but necessary calculation in Dole's maneuvers. According to one academic "authority on the politics of abortion," quoted approvingly by the *New York Times*, "These pro-life people will probably vote for Dole anyway, and to have them scream at him makes it look like he's not captive." It's like Clinton and Sister Souljah in 1992, the *Washington Post* speculates—an effort by Dole to distance himself from his party's least popular constituency.

Nonsense. Sister Souljah was a freak who had publicly endorsed black-on-white murders. Needless to say, this view had no delegates to the Democratic national convention; Clinton's disavowal of it was free of charge. Dole, by contrast, has picked a fight he may well lose with the GOP's most important and reliable base—serious people, *pace* the *Times* and the *Post*, with a serious and noble idea. In the process, he has invited eight weeks of unremitting and unflattering press obsession with this battle, deflected attention from the Clinton administration's appallingly abortion-friendly record, and almost guaranteed a week-long display of internecine ugliness in San Diego.

It will cost him. And it will damage the pro-life cause. The abortion platform plank the GOP will now make civil war over *is* flawed, after all. It is insufficiently pro-life. The most controversial of its five short sentences proposes an anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution. But the plank's four other sentences fail to commit the party to the awesome task of public persuasion necessary to achieve that goal.

That work will not get started this year, it seems. Bob Dole appears to believe it is impossible. "I mean, this is a moral issue," he says with exasperation. As if opinions grounded in morality were immutable, like curly hair, and all arguments about them were pointless and impolite.

American abortion politics have never been particularly healthy. Bob Dole has made the patient sicker.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: A NEW IDEA

by Terry Eastland

THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE is expected to vote shortly along strict party lines in favor of the so-called Equal Opportunity Act, which would end virtually all of the race- and sex-based preferences now administered by the federal government. The bill is sound in principle: When government favors members of one race in the award of limited opportunities, it necessarily discriminates against those of a different race. But it is not sound as a matter of strategy.

A year, or even six months, ago, this judgment could not have been rendered. It seemed then that the first Republican Congress in 40 years probably could produce the votes necessary to pass comprehensive anti-preference legislation and genuinely address this issue of fundamental moral and political principle. But for various reasons, including divisions over the bill within Republican ranks, it has been a low priority in the House, and an even lower one in the Senate.

Charles Canady

Now, with the clock running on the current Congress, the legislation is starting to move. But to what end? The full House could pass the bill if the leadership finally schedules a floor vote—a very big if. In the Senate, even if a majority were to support it, the bill would still be subject to filibuster. And so this Congress isn't going to pass the Equal Opportunity Act.

In private, no Republican member of Congress who endorses the legislation—sponsored by Florida representative Charles Canady and, before his departure last week, Sen. Bob Dole—would disagree with this assessment. Yet still the bill is being moved toward an inconsequential dead end. Its sponsors should ask instead whether there might be a smarter way to press the case.

The fact is, less might well be more. Case in point: the bill outlawing partial-birth abortions. Votes were lacking for more ambitious pro-life legislation. But majorities were available for a measure focused on the least defensible acts of abortion. Congress thus was able to send anti-abortion legislation to the president. He vetoed it, and there has been no override. But the bill and the veto together have drawn a clear political line along which the issue of abortion now will be fought in this year's elections and beyond. It is a fight in which the advantage lies with pro-life forces.

There is similar, less-is-more legislation that congressional Republicans might propose to help end federally sponsored discrimination. This would be a bill targeting preferences in contracting—and contracting alone. Such a bill would reduce the fronts on which congressional opponents of preferences would have to fight. It would not deal with the military's affirmative action program, for example, or sex-based classifications in federal employment. And since only contracting would be under discussion, supporters of non-discrimination would be able to focus attention on the least defensible preferences administered by the federal government.

Basically, in the normal system of competitive bidding for government contracts, the rule is that the low bid wins. It's a clear rule that contracting officers can apply and which every interested party—as well as the public at large—can understand. In no other area is there as much clarity about how the process would work in the absence of minority preferences. Nor as much clarity about the discrimination produced by the current system of preferences—*Adarand* v. *Pena*, the big Supreme Court decision last year, dealt with a contractor who spent 15 years battling contracting rules that unfairly penalized him before deciding he had had enough and undertaking a lawsuit.

The low-bid rule also provides a firm basis for calculating the economic cost of preferences—and they are costly. Last year, for example, the Defense Department's inspector general reported that the preference contracts for long-distance services over an eight-month period in 1992 cost taxpayers an additional $1.1 million. Worse, preferences in contracting tend to invite fraud; because contracts involve large dollar amounts, minorities and women have been recruited to serve as figureheads for firms owned by whites.

Finally, these preferences are manifestly not about giving breaks to young poor people. Participants in the preference program administered by the Small Business Administration may have a net worth of up to $250,000, excluding home and business equity, when a contract is first awarded, and up to $750,000 thereafter.

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A recent audit by the SBA's inspector general found that 35 of 50 randomly selected participants had net worths of more than $1 million, and that 12 of the 50 received annual compensation in excess of $750,000.

Facts like these explain why more Republicans would support a contracting-only bill than now endorse the Equal Opportunity Act—Rep. Gary Franks, one of two black Republicans in Congress, opposes the former but might co-sponsor the latter. It's also likely that a contracting-only bill would draw more Democratic support. Consider that a year ago Sen. Bill Bradley and numerous other Democrats voted with Republicans to repeal the FCC's tax certificate policy, an egregious preference scheme that amounted to corporate welfare for the well-to-do and well-connected (O.J. Simpson, Mr. T, and Colin Powell, among others).

So the prospects for getting a contracting-only bill out of Congress to the president's desk appear strong. The good news for non-discrimination strategists is that Clinton is too deeply and publicly committed to the use of race in contracting to coopt the anti-preference issue by signing such a measure. His Justice Department remains busy defending current programs against a series of challenges in federal district courts, and last month the administration announced long-awaited new rules on preferences in contracting that would preserve and even expand much of the status quo. If he vetoed a bill requiring color and sex blindness in contracting, Clinton would have to explain to the country exactly why he believes color and sex *should* be taken into account. And that's a clear loser for him.

A contracting-only bill also would help explain just what preferential treatment is. The Clinton administration emphasizes in its support of what it calls "race-conscious procurement" a device known as a "bid preference" or "credit." Under this procedure, contracting officers regard bids from non-minority firms as 10 percent higher in worth than their face value. Thus, a $4 million bid by a white-owned firm is treated as a $4.4 million bid, and a bid between $4 million and $4.4 million by a minority-owned firm trumps it. The minority-owned firm can't lose. The administration likes this device because it uses race as "a factor," not "the sole factor." This is a distinction without a difference: Any time race affects the final decision, it *is* the deciding factor. The administration now proposes to extend "bid preference" from the Pentagon, where it was first used, to all federal agencies.

The argument against a contracting-only bill is that because preferential treatment is such a contentious issue, it is better to deal with it all at once than piecemeal. That was a good argument a year ago. Not today. Less can be more, and so far, more has meant less than zero.

Terry Eastland, editor of **Forbes MediaCritic**, *is the author of* **Ending Affirmative Action**, *now available from BasicBooks.*

Teachers' Pet Party

by Myron Lieberman and Charlene K. Haar

If you like charades, you'll love the National Education Association's 1996 convention in Washington. From July 2-5, the 9,000-plus delegates will supposedly deliberate on what candidates, if any, the NEA will support in the 1996 elections. The NEA's political action committee endorsed Bill Clinton through the primaries, but only the NEA's Representative Assembly can endorse a presidential candidate in the general election. Needless to say, the endorsement is not in doubt.

Since it was established in 1972, NEA-PAC has never endorsed a Republican for president. It might well have considered Arlen Specter, had Specter stayed in the presidential race; the NEA had contributed to Specter campaigns in the past. In 39 contests for U.S. Senate seats in 1992, Specter was the only Republican candidate to be endorsed by NEA-PAC. It contributed $1,000 to his primary race; meanwhile it gave $5,000 to Lynn Yeakel in the Democratic primary and another $5,000 in the general election against Specter. This is about as close to "bipartisanship" as the NEA gets.

So far in the 1996 elections, NEA-PAC has endorsed 185 candidates for Congress—all Democrats. It has also agreed informally to focus its efforts on the Clinton campaign/Democratic National Committee list of 27 target states. Inasmuch as NEA-PAC plans to raise $6.5 million in cash, and its cash contributions will undoubtedly be dwarfed by its usual avalanche of in-kind contributions, no one should underestimate the NEA's commitment to the Clinton campaign. NEA-PAC is working closely with the DNC to slot delegates to the Democratic convention; the expectation is that the NEA will send more delegates to the Democratic convention than any other interest group or state. Considering that California is entitled to 422 delegates out of 4,321, it is plain that the NEA will play a

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prominent role in anointing Clinton for a second term.

This process is made easier since the NEA and NEA-PAC staff now participate in all political and senior-staff meetings held by the Democratic party. Obviously, NEA coordination with DNC and Clinton White House initiatives is substantial. It should also be noted that Debra S. DeLee, chief executive officer of the 1996 Democratic convention, was director of government relations at the NEA before being employed as executive director of the DNC.

Although many offices at NEA headquarters display Clinton campaign memorabilia, the NEA's internal polls indicate that almost 40 percent of its 2.2 million members identify themselves as Republicans. This is only one of the reasons the NEA goes to great lengths to characterize itself as bipartisan. In the past, NEA-PAC always managed to endorse a few Republicans, especially in marginal districts, to perpetuate the fiction. This year, however, it is experiencing unprecedented difficulty in identifying Republicans to endorse. NEA-PAC endorsement guidelines call for endorsing incumbents who vote the NEA way at least 80 percent of the time. But with the retirement or defeat of numerous "moderates," NEA-PAC is having so much trouble finding Republicans to endorse that it is considering whether to lower the 80 percent standard; if it doesn't, NEA's "bipartisanship" will be harder than ever to assert with a straight face.

Just how difficult may be judged from the fact that NEA-PAC will probably contribute more "soft money" to Republican state committees than in the past. Soft money goes to party organizations rather than candidate organizations and is used for slate mailers, get-out-the-vote drives, and other party-building activities. As matters stand, the only way the NEA can maintain the fiction of bipartisanship is to contribute to Republican organizations. As a result, state Republican organizations may be astonished to be offered more NEA-PAC funds than in the past, though still a small proportion of total NEA contributions. From 1988 to 1994, 48 state Democratic party organizations received more than $2.3 million from NEA-PAC; in the same period, six state Republican organizations shared less than $75,000.

While the money is readily traced through Federal Election Commission reports, the NEA's real impact comes from mobilizing its members to "volunteer" in campaigns. In every congressional district in America, NEA UniServ officers direct national and state political activities. In addition, NEA staff are dispatched to targeted states to assist with phone banks, door-to-door canvassing, absentee vote programs, media development and coordination, and polling and consulting to benefit NEA-endorsed candidates.

Recent developments underscore the critical importance of the NEA's search for Republicans in marginal districts. By now, most people have heard about the struggle in late 1995 in the California Assembly over the speakership. On two occasions, then-speaker Willie Brown found a Republican member of the Assembly to deviate from a straight party vote to elect a Democratic speaker. On both occasions, the Republican defectors had been endorsed by the California Teachers Association (the state affiliate of the NEA), which also supported them in the recall elections following their effort to preserve Democratic control of the speakership.

Another example was the November 1, 1995, vote in the House of Representatives over whether to terminate the NEA's tax exemption. The exemption was included in the NEA's charter, which was accepted in 1907. Organizations chartered by Congress include the American National Red Cross, the American Legion, AMVETS, American War Mothers, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Disabled American Veterans.

The NEA is now, legally and practically, a trade union, and as such, it should not be entitled to a tax exemption on its property in the District of Columbia. Even Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, was willing to cooperate with "right wing" forces to eliminate the NEA's exemption, as long as his role was invisible. The NEA's defense was that Congress was taking "punitive" action by lifting its exemption but not the exemption of the other organizations chartered by Congress. Of course, the NEA did not mention the fact that none of the other organizations had become a trade union since it was chartered. The motion to lift the exemption lost by three votes, 210-213. Representatives generally voted along party lines: 201 Republicans and 9 Democrats for the NEA to pay up, 184 Democrats and 29 Republicans for the status-quo taxpayer subsidy. A handful of NEA-endorsed Republicans saved the exemption.

The exemption is worth about $1.7 million annually to the NEA. While the Republicans and the media focused their attention on a cosmetic District of Columbia voucher plan that would have changed nothing, the most powerful Democratic machine in the United States managed to avoid paying taxes on its buildings another year, at a time when the District of Columbia is in desperate financial condition. The savings, which are roughly equal to NEA dues from 16,500 members, will be used against Republican candidates. Those who refer to the Republican party as "the stupid party" have a better case than they know.

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STONEWALLING AT YALE

by Neomi Rao

THE FREE AND OPEN EXCHANGE of ideas and information, however unpopular they may be, is supposedly the governing principle of the university; it's called "academic freedom," and it undergirds the system of lifetime tenure for professors, among other things. The Yale University Corporation, the school's board of directors, is betraying that principle by suppressing a report on the university's handling of a $20 million grant—a report it commissioned from José Cabranes, a U.S. circuit court judge and potential Supreme Court nominee in a second Clinton term.

The $20 million grant, the most notorious charitable donation in memory, came from Texas multimillionaire Lee Bass, who earmarked the money specifically for the the study of Western civilization at Yale. Bass presented his gift in 1991 after a speech by then-dean Donald Kagan blasting the academic assaults on what Matthew Arnold called "the best that has been thought and said." Three years later, in an unprecedented move, Yale returned the grant. Bass had, the school said, demanded oversight privileges that violated the school's academic freedom.

José Cabranes

Michael Ramirez

This explanation was disingenuous. The truth is that from the moment it was announced, the grant was viewed as an outrage by the very professors on campus Kagan was implicitly attacking—professors who believe that the study of Western civilization is elitist, exclusionary, racist, sexist, and intellectually genocidal. Indeed, the only administration action on the grant before its return came when university president Richard Levin formed a committee to study *alternative* uses for the Bass money—without informing Bass.

As one professor close to the administration puts it, "At each stage Levin had to do something willfully strange to not do the obvious"—spend the money Bass had given the school. Richard Franke, chairman of the Yale Corporation, admits that the delay on the Bass money was "a mistake."

In a meeting with alumni in May 1995, President Levin promised that an internal review would get to the bottom of what had happened to the Bass money. Cabranes and a fellow member of the Yale Corporation, Henry Schacht, began an investigation of the matter last fall and produced a report that must be damning, because the Corporation will not release any information from it, despite repeated requests from alumni. "It's our report," Franke says firmly. "We never had the responsibility or the need to release it. Things have died down and we've moved on. Why keep the issue alive?"

Aside from the simple fact that it would be the right thing to do, Franke should consider releasing the report for the very reason he doesn't want to. He knows full well that "the issue" of the Bass grant and the university's bewildering treatment of it *is* still alive. Nothing has been resolved. Alumni are still angry, and the administration continues to shy away from instituting a specific Western civilization program. As the Yale Class of 1937, a very active alumni group, noted in its summer news bulletin, the administration's interest in Western civilization "is tempered by the resistance of illiberal faculty, who support multiculturalism. Such a conclusion is unfortunately enhanced by the failure of the Corporation to release publicly its Cabranes-Schacht report on the reasons for derailment of the original Lee Bass gift."

From the Corporation's point of view, the group of alumni who feel strongly about Western civilization is small and, indeed, has a negligible effect on the university's bottom line. Franke says quite confidently, "I think that the gifts [from alumni] speak for themselves."

If the administration and the Corporation wanted to prove that the Bass fiasco had not been caused by politics or ideology, the Class of '37 offered them the perfect opportunity. After the Bass debacle, the Class of '37 tried to work closely with Levin and other administrators to assist in restoring Yale's reputation

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by promoting the university's commitment to Western civilization. The administration assured the Class that it wanted to make a "conspicuous gesture" to demonstrate such a commitment. But repeated efforts by the Class—including a proposed donation drive to raise money for Western civ—were shot down. In a letter to be published in the upcoming *Yale Alumni Magazine*, the Class writes collectively, "With the situation apparently deadlocked, '37 asked a fundamental question, '*If* the necessary funding were made available, *then* would Yale establish a major Western civilization program?' The definitive answer from the corporation and the administration was 'No.' Yale's approach to western civilization will proceed 'incrementally.'"

Franke confirms the essence of the letter. "It's not some sort of master plot or anything," he says. "It was our ultimate conclusion that we had done what was appropriate as far as Western civilization is concerned." The administration's "appropriate" and "incremental" approach ended after only two small steps. First, it announced an expansion of the Directed Studies program to admit 35 more students. Directed Studies is a rigorous course of study for freshmen that covers Western history, philosophy, and literature, and it usually has many more applicants than spaces. The second, and virtually meaningless, step was to lift the 18-person cap on the humanities major. But since the major attracted only 25 qualified students, there was no increase in the number of courses offered.

Although the Class of '37 welcomed these steps, in a letter to its members and the secretaries of other classes, it said these gestures "are not enough to allay suspicions [that multiculturalism dominates the University], to demonstrate Yale's commitment to Western civilization studies, or to restore alumni support."

And yet, despite such dissatisfaction, "alumni giving is up," Franke says, and he points to another $20 million donation from another Bass—Lee's brother Robert, whose money is earmarked for the renovation of Yale dormitories.

Indeed, the Yale public relations machine can boast that last year overall alumni participation increased 8 percent, and that in fiscal year 1994-95 alumni donated $200 million. Realizing its tenuous position, the administration even maintains its own arsenal of unofficial advisers, including the ideologically dizzying David Gergen, who was elected to the Corporation earlier this month. Western-civ proponents inside the administration say Gergen was involved not only in helping Yale spin the media when it decided to return the Bass grant but also in shutting down the Class of '37's fund-raising proposal. Franke says Gergen's involvement is no big secret, and that because of his background, Gergen was "asked to look as Yale's communications programs." Gergen denies any involvement with the Bass grant and says Levin has called him four or five times over the past year and a half to discuss different university matters.

Gergen makes it very clear he "wants to be on the record as being pro-Western civilization." Other Corporation members agree. "By the way," says Franke, "I'm a great supporter of Western civilization." Both men sound sincere. But at Yale, the question has become: What are you willing to do about it?

Not too much, since the whole controversy is not about the value of Western civilization, which most people recognize, but rather its political implications. "Western civilization is a misnomer," says Franke, its purported supporter. "It's gotten so politicized that it doesn't mean anything." Defending the only intellectual tradition self-critical enough to produce Yale's liberal professors—and whose belief in the free exchange of ideas has granted those very same professors lifetime tenure—is somehow to be identified with a reactionary fringe.

Levin's predecessor as Yale president, Benno Schmidt, was viciously attacked by liberal faculty, who opposed him on many issues, including the school's embarrassing and expensive labor disputes. Today, the faculty has remained silent as the labor unions struggle with the university. This has been Levin's bargain: The president, an economist by training, has traded Western-civilization studies for peace and quiet on campus.

Peace on campus has meant that the curriculum now includes more than 100 courses on the narrow issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. The university offers comprehensive majors in women's studies and African-American studies. In 1993, the administration easily caved in to student pressures to maintain separate Chicano and Puerto Rican ethnic deans—all this while discouraging programs in Western civilization.

Though donations are at an all-time high, some of the most faithful alumni are indeed being pushed to the limit, no matter how confident Franke may be. Keeping alumni in the dark while paying lip service to Western civ is likely to backfire. Perry Bass, the Bass family patriarch, has minimized the impact of his son Robert's donation by saying he is not yet convinced that Yale is serious about Western civilization. And $20 million from Robert is a paltry sum compared with what Yale could lose by being omitted from Perry Bass's will. His estimated worth: $6 billion. If the free and open exchange of ideas is ever extended to Cabranes's report of the Bass fiasco, the Corporation will likely learn its lesson in Western civilization the Levin way—through the economic decisions of its alumni. ♦

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Bruce Babbitt, Pipeline to the Almighty

By Robert H. Nelson

For ten points, identify the secretary of the interior who once said that his political enemies were out to destroy him because they were "so deeply disturbed by the prospect of religious values entering the national debate" and that they should follow his policies because said policies are commanded in the Bible and reflect a "plan of God." The choices are (a) Cecil Andrus of the Carter administration; (b) James Watt of the Reagan administration; and (c) Bruce Babbitt of the Clinton administration. Most people would assume James Watt is the answer. Wrong. The correct answer is Bruce Babbitt.

Since last fall, Babbitt has been giving speeches to groups like the League of Conservation Voters in which he says that, through his environmental policies, he is carrying out God's instructions.

THROUGH HIS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES, THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR SAYS, HE IS CARRYING OUT GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS.

In a December 1995 speech, Babbitt put it this way: "In Genesis, Noah was commanded to take into the ark two by two and seven by seven every living thing in creation, the clean and unclean. He did not specify that Noah should limit the ark to two charismatic species, two good for hunting, two species that might provide some cure down the road, and, say, two that draw crowds to the city zoo. No, He specified *the whole of Creation*." And therefore, as Babbitt concludes, the Endangered Species Act must not be altered to take costs into consideration or to set priorities among species, as hostile Republican critics in the Congress have been advocating.

Babbitt also speaks of his disillusionment with the Catholic church of his youth and his discovery in the San Francisco Peaks near his Arizona home that "the vast landscape was somehow sacred and holy, and connected to me in a sense that my catechism ignored." He "came to believe, deeply and irrevocably, that the land, and that blue mountain, and all the plants and animals in the natural world are together a direct reflection of divinity."

Although it may be startling to hear such talk from a liberal Democrat, Babbitt's injection of overt religious themes into the language of daily policy debate is actually the logical culmination of a long process. The environmental movement began by arguing its case primarily in secular, scientific terms. Yet the language of the movement always had powerful religious overtones. For years, activists have been speaking of native forests as "ancient cathedrals," of the "desecration" of nature, of an "apocalypse" that will result from human "transgressions" against the earth, of a "calling" to "save" the natural world.

The philosophical writings of environmentalism contain frequent declarations that, in the long run, saving the environment requires a change in the human heart—a leap of faith. In *The Voice of the Earth* (1992), Theodore Roszak wrote that "the emerging worldview of our day will have to address questions of a frankly religious character." The goal must be "ethical conduct, moral purpose, and the meaning of life," as humanity seeks "to heal the soul of its wounds" and thereby guide it "to salvation."

In a famous 1967 article in *Science*, Lynn White argued that environmentalism would only succeed when it had a religious foundation. However, White said this would probably require a turn away from Christianity. Judeo-Christian teachings, such as the message of human dominion over the earth in Genesis, encouraged human beings to stand apart from the natural world and to do what they wanted to the earth for their own convenience. Instead, to develop a proper reverence for nature, it would be necessary to turn toward Asian, Native American, and other faiths that saw man and nature in much greater intrinsic unity.

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Taken for many years as the definitive statement, White's analysis did not augur well for the future of environmentalism in a nation where 90 percent of the people consider themselves Christian. However, White had fundamentally misread the religious origins of modern environmentalism. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club in 1892 and the leading preservationist of his time, commonly referred to primitive forests as "temples" and to the sound of trees as "psalm singing." He sought to preserve the wilderness because there it was possible to find "terrestrial manifestations of God," providing a "window opening into heaven, a mirror reflecting the Creator"—much the same language that Babbitt is now using.

Muir was raised according to the dictates of a strict Protestant sect called the Campbellites. But, like many others in the modern age, by his twenties he had left many of the doctrines of his youth behind. "I take more intense delight from reading the power and goodness of God from 'the things which are made' than from the Bible," Muir said. According to environmental historian Donald Worster, Muir "invented a new kind of frontier religion; one based on going to the wilderness to experience the loving presence of God."

Muir obtained his philosophy of nature from New England transcendentalism. For the transcendentalists as well, nature was the best link between God and humanity. Emerson, Thoreau, and other transcendentalists in turn drew much of their inspiration from their Puritan Boston forebears. The Puritans also, as the great historian Perry Miller said, were "obsessed" with the "theology of nature." In the Puritan theology of the colonial era, the plants and animals of the natural world were "ministers and apostles of God, the vehicles and the way by which we are carried to God."

Other Puritan themes are also in evidence today. David Brower, perhaps the leading environmental figure of our time, described the human presence in the world as a "cancer." Or as Paul Watson, a founder of Greenpeace, once put it, "We, the human species, have become a viral epidemic to the earth"—in truth, the "AIDS of the earth." Such dark visions hark back to the Calvinist and Puritan conception of a depraved world of human beings infected with sin, tempted to their own destruction at every step by the devil and his devious tricks.

That may be why the movement today resonates so powerfully with so many Americans. As Worster explains, "Surely it cannot be surprising that in a culture deeply rooted in Protestantism, we should find ourselves speaking its language, expressing its temperament, even when we thought we were free of all that." The environmental movement today is strongest in Germany, Sweden, and Holland—all countries with strong Protestant heritages.

Babbitt's recent decision to appeal to the Bible to justify his environmental policies thus is making explicit what has long been implicit in the environmental movement. Indeed, before becoming secretary of the interior, he had given voice to similar ideas. In a 1992 speech to the Humane Society, he described a "pilgrimage" that had led him to reject "mankind's expansion at the expense of Creation."

Babbitt is not the only leading politician turning to religious themes. Vice President Al Gore said recently that "we need a new reverence for the environment as a whole" and that we must learn to stop "heaping contempt on God's Creation." Roger Kennedy, the director of the National Park Service, declared in a 1994 speech to the National Wilderness Conference that "wilderness is a religious concept" that should be a "part of our religious life." Encountering the wilderness puts us in the presence of "the unknowable and the uncontrollable before which all humans stand in awe"—that is to say, in the presence of God.

What explains this recent outbreak of public piety in the Clinton administration? It is in part a recognition of a political problem. Until recently, leaders of the environmental movement argued mainly that environmental protection was justified because it was good for us humans. Protecting the plant and animal species of the rain forests of the world is necessary, some say, because they may provide the chemical basis to discover future drugs that will protect human health. In his book *A Moment on the Earth*, Gregg Easterbrook makes the claim that environmentalism has been an economic benefit to the United States.

But economists studying the Clean Water Act have consistently found that the added swimming, fishing, and other direct economic benefits are only a fraction of the $50 billion per year in cleanup costs to the nation. The Environmental Protection Agency reached this conclusion itself in a 1993 analysis of President Clinton's plans to rewrite the act. Mark Sagoff of the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland says that the marginal economic value to society of protecting one more endangered species "may be nothing."

As a result, the moderate environmentalist argument is giving way in some circles to what might be called the messianist argument, as in Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature*: Environmentalism must alter the modern value system to give a much greater weight to preserving nature from human alteration. That will also mean that new allies will be needed, prepared to

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fight explicitly on values grounds. The leading candidates perhaps are to be found in the churches of America. This may be particularly promising in light of the essentially Judeo-Christian themes that run throughout environmental causes and values.

Several years ago, Carl Sagan and others called for new efforts to forge an alliance between the organized environmental movement and the churches of America. The scientists themselves, as they acknowledged, were often not particularly devout—indeed, Sagan is something of a village atheist. Rather, they had simply concluded that the environmental movement would never really succeed until the average American felt a greater reverence for the environment. A good precedent was the civil rights movement, which was religiously motivated and depended heavily on political backing from organized churches.

Suffering falling membership and waning interest in their traditional messages, the mainline Protestant churches have responded enthusiastically to such environmental overtures. The journal of the Natural Resources Defense Council reported enthusiastically in the fall of 1995 that presently "eco-activism is blooming in the religious community." Babbitt, Gore, and other Clinton administration spokesmen are now elevating this new environmental tack to the level of national political debate.

Bruce Babbitt

Chas Fagan

This is a high-risk strategy. Many fellow environmentalists, grounded in secular culture, are distinctly uncomfortable with appeals to biblical passages as a basis for protecting the environment. The suggestion that perhaps they need a new introspection to explore the real religious roots of their own thinking also may not sit well.

Babbitt threatens to open a Pandora's Box with respect to issues of separation of church and state. In the framework of existing constitutional exegesis, no satisfactory answers will be found to questions such as the following: (1) If environmentalism does literally teach a religious message, how can the active teaching of this message in the public schools be justified, when traditional Christian beliefs—from which the environmental message is in major part originally derived—are not allowed similar proselytizing? (2) If a wilderness is literally a church of environmental religion, which many people today visit to experience a spiritual awakening, why is it permissible for the government to maintain this type of place of worship but not an ordinary Christian church?

Babbitt is also venturing into theological quicksand. Human beings, he and other environmentalists are telling us, must protect nature because God made it that way and intended that it should remain that way as one direct manifestation available in this world of divine workmanship. This argument really makes sense only if the world still literally exists as God once created it. Babbitt thus seems to be putting himself in the same camp with old-style Christian creationists.

The two are hardly likely to become political allies, however. The Christian Right has for some time been attacking environmentalism as a new pagan heresy afoot in the land. Babbitt lent some credence to this view when in his recent speech he said that the Catholic priesthood had failed him in his youth and "it was a young Hopi friend who taught me that the blue mountain was, truly, a sacred place." This remark has already prompted the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights to denounce Babbitt for maligning Catholicism and following instead the teachings of "Native American 'priests of the snake clan.'"

For most of its history, environmentalism has been more a *substitute* for, than a complement to, religious institutions. Environmentalism appropriated a Judeo-Christian message, already deeply ingrained in the national psyche, to a new and largely secular vocabulary. This combination proved immensely attractive to large numbers of people hungry for spiritual values but seemingly unable to find them from more traditional outlets.

One can sympathize with the need to search for new religious answers at a time when the forces of modernity often seem to have undercut the moral foundations of American society. Yet, when government can barely get the potholes filled in the streets, it is still startling to think that the secretary of the interior regards his position as a suitable pulpit for spreading the word of God. ♦

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Recycling Doom and Gloom

By Vincent Carroll

Lester Brown and his Worldwatch Institute rarely miss an angle when describing the coming global calamity, the one that is unfolding right before our blinkered eyes. Even the behavior of mosquitoes is worth a melodramatic pause in Worldwatch's annual book-long jeremiad, the *State of the World*.

"Rising temperatures also decrease the time between meals, so the mosquitoes bite humans more frequently," *State of the World 1996* solemnly warns. And lest anyone suppose that ravenous mosquitoes are merely a specter of a far-off era, please be advised: "We are already feeling the early effects of an altered climate."

Despite such heavy breathing—or perhaps because of it—Worldwatch is one of the environmental movement's most oft-quoted think tanks, with many hundreds of references in Nexis in the past two years alone. But then hyperbolic rhetoric on behalf of the environment has rarely been a deterrent to serious consideration by the mainstream press, a fact conservatives have rediscovered during the past year to their dismay. Not only are they on the defensive on environmental issues—some might say in chaotic retreat—but a growing number of Republican officeholders seem inclined to concede to green activists on a whole range of issues in order to mute the charge that they are out to trash and burn nature. It is an understandable election-year impulse, but it can only postpone the inevitable brawls.

In truth, there is no way to accommodate leading environmentalists on many issues short of abandoning good science and economic freedom. Lester Brown, for example, is a utopian of the old school. He seeks to change human nature so we will not want what humans have wanted since time immemorial: to improve our material well-being and that of our descendants. Of course, you too might be pining for a new monastic ethic if you believed that "the effort now needed to reverse the environmental degradation of the planet and ensure a sustainable future for the next generation will require mobilization on a scale comparable to World War II." This is what Brown himself writes in the current *State of the World*.

This apocalyptic vision, repeated like a mantra at every opportunity, distorts Worldwatch's handling of almost every issue. In their eagerness to detect climate change, for example, Brown and his co-authors breathlessly chronicle an ominous assault of hurricanes and typhoons in recent years, which have inflicted "unprecedented damage." The southeastern United States has been pummeled repeatedly, they say, "after two decades of relative calm," and 1995 was "the most active Atlantic hurricane season since the thirties." Yet as anyone who checks the actual climatological record will discover, the 1990s have been anything but a sensational period for Atlantic hurricanes. Last year was indeed a bruiser, but then so were 1916, 1933, and 1969, to mention but three other rough years. One stormy season hardly establishes a trend. As it happens, the years prior to 1995 were not just unusually mild. According to William M. Gray, professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University, 1991 through 1994 were the "most inactive" consecutive four years since hurricane records have been kept.

For that matter, even the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change explicitly concedes that climate models "give no consistent indication whether tropical storms will increase or decrease in frequency or intensity as climate changes; neither is there any evidence that this has occurred over the past few decades."

Given such easily obtainable data, the wonder is that Worldwatch would dare to raise the issue of hurricanes at all, particularly when its writers admit, in one of their typically muted and passing disclaimers, that "hurricane severity is not definitively linked to climate warming." But that is the modus operandi of Worldwatch: Seize a few indisputable facts, ignore or downplay the larger context, and skillfully spin out a drama of impending calamity. Has the world seen the reemergence of a few old diseases like malaria and the appearance of a few relatively new ones like AIDS? Why, yes. Well then, humanity must be "experiencing an epidemic of epidemics" and a "growing burden of

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infectious diseases," all brought about, one is led to understand, by ecological disruption. How lengthening lifespans in most places on the globe jibe with this melodrama is never quite made clear. For that matter, the likelihood that cultural problems, as opposed to environmental degradation, largely explain the appalling health crises in such places as sub-Saharan Africa is essentially overlooked.

But then it would be hard to please Brown and his Worldwatch analysts under the best of circumstances. In a typical passage of bewildering inanity, they portentously assert that "a sustainable economy is one with a stable climate," as if climate over the millennia had ever been naturally "stable" and many of the world's most vibrant economies were not thriving already in regions with tremendous seasonal fluctuations in weather.

In Worldwatch's view, the long and short of our condition is this: Humans are in for a very bad time, and soon; many, in fact, could starve, if we don't stabilize our population, reduce our consumption, simplify our lifestyles, swear off an addiction to autos, eat less meat, and start "reusing or recycling every chemical or material that [industry] uses in cyclical processes." This is the message not just of *State of the World 1996*, but of the previous 12 editions and, indeed, of much of what Lester Brown has written literally for decades. Like a stubborn prophet who keeps miscomputing Judgment Day, Brown is unhumbled by years of frustratingly premature warnings of an environmental reckoning. He merely updates his references and recycles his thesis once more.

Brown's formula certainly hasn't alienated the impressive list of large foundations that shovel money the institute's way—revenue that helps Worldwatch publish numerous books, "Worldwatch papers," and a magazine. Of all these, *State of the World* is clearly the Washington, D.C.-based institute's crown jewel. Not only is it published in more than two dozen languages, but admirers such as Ted Turner make sure copies are distributed to hundreds of the world's corporate and governmental leaders.

Ironically, Brown has been most spectacularly wrong and tediously repetitive about the field in which he boasts the most expertise: agriculture. Not only does he hold a B.S. in agriculture from Rutgers (1955), but he served as an expert in international development in the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the 1960s before taking a post with the Overseas Development Council—ideal perches from which to witness the explosion of farm productivity in the postwar era. Yet he remains singularly unimpressed. Virtually every time he sits down to assess the future, Brown spies an imminent crisis in grain supplies.

In a *Science* article in 1967, for example, he claimed: "The trend in grain stocks indicates clearly that 1961 marked a worldwide turning point. . . . Food consumption moved ahead of production."

Michael Ramirez

In 1974, he updated that thought in his book *By Bread Alone*:

> These events of the early seventies signal a fundamental shift in the structure of the world food economy. Throughout most of the period since World War II, the world food economy has been plagued by chronic excess capacity, surplus stocks, and low food prices. But emerging conditions suggest that this era is ending and is being replaced by a period of more or less chronic scarcity and higher prices, with little if any land held out of production.

Here is that same theme yet again, retooled for 1996:

> Rising food prices may be the first global economic indicator to signal serious trouble on the environmental front. . . . The tightening of grain supplies that began in 1995 could mark the conversion of the buyer's market of the last half century to a seller's market. . . . As scarcity spreads, exporting countries may try to control

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food price rises internally by restricting exports, thus exacerbating scarcity in the rest of the world.

For those wondering, food has been on a fairly steady track of increasing abundance since World War II, and its real price in the international marketplace, despite temporary fluctuations, has dropped dramatically as a result. Blissfully unembarrassed by such trends, Brown has ventured into predicting more or less permanent worldwide shortages in other areas as well. In 1979, for example, he issued a book-long tocsin about oil supplies and what he took to be the dimming future of the automobile.

As he and two co-authors of *Running on Empty* proclaimed, "time already is growing short. With oil price rises in the eighties likely to dwarf those of the seventies," countries must act quickly so that alternatives come on line "as the oil wells go dry." In Sweden, the authors happily reported, "the whole concept of private automobile ownership is being examined."

If Brown had been recklessly preposterous in his forecasts and nothing more, one might dismiss him as a harmless if high-profile crank. Unfortunately, he is also a man enamored of bureaucratic and implicitly coercive solutions to forestall the crisis that is always on the horizon. Not that he is a statist by admission. Quite the contrary. Over the years, *State of the World* has repeatedly acknowledged that market-based economies are more energy efficient and produce less pollution per capita than their Soviet-style counterparts. In the latest *State of the World*, a whole chapter is devoted to "Harnessing the Market for the Environment," a plea for shifting taxes from work and investment to consumption and resource depletion.

But what Brown & Co. offer with one hand, they more than take back with the other. How could it be otherwise, given their belief that people in industrial societies "injure each other and their descendants simply by getting up and going to work each day"? If this is true—if industrial society really hasn't been the boon for humanity that most people who know anything about history assume it has been—then clearly extraordinary measures are demanded. Hence their perfunctory genuflection toward markets is overwhelmed by their calls for a wartime-like mobilization that only government could direct; their hectoring over the years for a variety of higher taxes and praise for the social democracies, which best approximate their fiscal model; their fear of economic growth; their demand for "restricting" the production of automobiles; their lamentations over our taste for "large houses" and our fondness for meat; and their related conviction that lifestyles and public consciousness must be transformed in order to "save the planet."

Not only does *State of the World 1996* restate these themes, it also pleads for an "environmental human rights law" to provide extraordinary legal leverage against "multinational corporations." Most chillingly, the authors' obsession with population growth leads them to repeat more than once their longstanding praise of China's murderous family planning policies, in willful ignorance of the now irrefutable evidence of infanticide, forced abortions, and starvation of children in orphanages. Or perhaps not ignorance, but rather conscious support. What else can explain the following Orwellian statement: "Like China, other governments will have to carefully balance the reproductive rights of the current generation with the survival rights of the next generation."

The most remarkable outline of Lester Brown's vision appeared several years ago, in the March-April 1990 *Worldwatch* magazine. There, he and two longtime colleagues, Christopher Flavin and Sandra Postel, kicked back and contemplated what an ideal society would look like in 2030. Many details were predictable: virtually no reliance on fossil fuels or nuclear power; a stable or preferably declining population; cities crisscrossed with light rail systems and bike paths; the abandonment of gross national product as an economic indicator; minuscule military budgets. But that was only the warm-up, for Brown, Flavin, and Postel had something more fundamental in mind:

> Movement toward a lasting society cannot occur without a transformation of individual priorities and values. . . . Because of the strain on resources it creates, materialism simply cannot survive the transition to a sustainable world. As public understanding of the need to adopt simpler and less consumptive lifestyles spreads, it will become unfashionable to own fancy new cars, clothes, and the latest electronic devices. The potential benefits of unleashing the human energy now devoted to producing, advertising, buying, consuming, and discarding material goods are enormous.
>
> As the amassing of personal and national wealth becomes less of a goal, the gap between haves and have-nots will gradually close, eliminating many societal tensions. Ideological differences may fade as well . . .

The mind simply boggles at such lingering faith in a transformed human consciousness, given this century's catastrophic legacy from similar yearnings. Still, credit Brown & Co. with a unique theoretical synthesis: the melding of Charles Reich and Thomas Malthus with St. Simeon Stylites. For that matter, they seem to have stumbled onto one profoundly plausible forecast—at last. In such a world as they describe, the differences between haves and have-nots might well disappear, if only because the haves would probably vanish altogether. One somehow doubts this is the future that most environmentally conscious Americans have in mind. ♦

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Why Europe Is Boring America to Death

By David Brooks

As I was listening to Margaret Thatcher speak at a conference in Prague last month, I began reminiscing about the four years, starting in 1990, I spent writing from Europe for the *Wall Street Journal*. I was recalling the devices I would use to trick Americans into reading articles on European topics. For example, I found I could sucker Americans into reading about Europe if I stuck the name Margaret Thatcher in the first sentence. Europe is boring but Lady T is interesting.

I also found I could hook a certain number of readers if I told a few anecdotes about how Eurocrats were issuing regulations on cucumber lengths, the curvature of bananas, condom elasticity, and phallic objects generally. Then there was the warning-sign trope, in which I would declare Sweden's welfare sclerosis a warning sign for the American welfare state or Italy's pension crisis a warning sign for America's Social Security mess. *See*, I was saying, *how European social problems are relevant to American social problems?*

But my efforts were hindered by the fact that Western Europe is just not that interesting these days, unless you get tingly at the mention of monetary union. No one feels that Europe is the future, that what Europeans are going through now we'll go through later. On the contrary, Europeans know that all trends begin in the New World. No one feels that Europe is the center of the world's energy; corporate types look to East Asia for that. Few people feel that the huge problems over the next decades will be European in origin. According to writer Jeffrey Gedmin, fewer than 10 percent of the articles in the journal *Foreign Affairs* over the past five years have been on European topics.

In fact, the most interesting thing about Western Europe is how boring it has become to Americans. After two centuries in which we rebelled against Europe, emulated Europe, competed with Europe, and, from World War I through the end of the Cold War, saved Europe, Americans are now indifferent to Europe. This is a big thing, in many ways as important as the closing of the western frontier.

It's big in more than just the geostrategic "Whither NATO?" sense. It's big because of what it says about the state of American culture. For a rambunctious, populist, consumerist, and free-wheeling America, European cultural influence has long exercised a countervailing pressure in the direction of refinement, high culture, and civility. American life has benefited from the balance between homegrown American populism and imported European elitism. American architects took European temples and palaces and turned them into democratic train stations, libraries, and city halls. American universities modeled themselves on English or German counterparts but let in students from tenements as much as estates. American etiquette books drew on the manners of European aristocrats but adapted them for a mass audience. Now, with Europe drifting from American consciousness, that countervailing pressure is gone. And its withdrawal means that homegrown populism, commercialism, and radical egalitarianism can surge unchecked.

The academics who rail against Eurocentrism give the impression that Americans have always been blindly following in the footsteps of the Dead White European Males. But that's not even close to being true, of course. For much of our history, we Americans have consciously rejected European mores. Between the end of the French and Indian Wars until about the 1820s, Americans were convinced that Europe was a desiccated graveyard of a continent. Europe was weighed down by history, corrupted by luxury and vice. As the historian Joseph Ellis documents in his book *After the Revolution*, Americans were filled with optimism that they were on the verge of a golden age. The spark of genius would break free from the shackles of European custom and would land in simpler and more virtuous America. Soon, many thought, there would be American Shakespeares, Dantes, and Ciceros.

It quickly became clear, however, that while American liberty produced a country that was politically healthy and economically prosperous, liberty by itself didn't produce cultural or artistic greatness. "This country has not fulfilled what seemed to be the reasonable expectation of mankind," Ralph Waldo Emerson

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told a Dartmouth audience in 1838. "Men looked, when all feudal straps and bandages were snapped asunder, that nature, too long the mother of dwarfs, should reimburse itself by a brood of Titans. . . . But the mark of American merit in painting, in sculpture, in poetry, in fiction, in eloquence, seems to be a certain grace without grandeur, and itself not new but derivative."

Americans realized they were not on the cutting edge of history; they were still woefully behind Europe and had a lot to learn. Soon a much more ambivalent attitude toward Europe prevailed. Any tour through 19th-century American literature reveals how Europe transfixed polite society, setting the pace for fashion, learning, and civilization. A common view was that American life was not yet rich enough to produce great literature. The country would have to grow up some more.

AMERICA TOOK EUROPEAN REFINEMENT AND DEMOCRATIZED IT, MULTICULTURALIZED IT, AND MADE IT A CONSUMER ITEM.

Still, Americans didn't just swallow European culture whole. They Americanized it. America took European refinement and democratized it, multiculturalized it, and made it a consumer item, so that anybody who could afford to could enjoy it. European paintings and sculpture were put on display by people like P. T. Barnum, who charged admission for the masses.

A typical American innovation was the luxury hotel, which was essentially a European palace transmogrified into a profit-making institution. The Tremont House opened in Boston in 1829, a palace built for overnight guests and decorated in the French style. Here guests could get the service that previously had been reserved for a lord at his manor. Families could have rooms to themselves with washing facilities, a relative novelty at a time when most inns were savage. There were speaking tubes from rooms to the front desk, and a reading room downstairs. Soon every city had such magnificent hotels. The St. Nicholas in New York had Flemish tapestries. The Palace in San Francisco had 6-foot marble mantels in every room. The Palmer House in Chicago had silver dollars embedded in its floor, a perfect example of European luxuriousness turned brassily American.

Parks were another institution of European aristocracy turned democratic by Americans. Frederick Law Olmsted was set to become a farmer until an 1850 trip to England, when he marvelled at the gardens of the aristocracy. But, he wondered, "is it right that this should be for the few, the very few of us, when for many of the rest there must be but bare walls, tile floors . . . ?" The parks he subsequently designed in the United States—New York's Central Park, Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, and many others—were meant to bring the elevating spirit of the manor grounds to the masses.

Similarly, American etiquette is drawn from the manners of the European aristocracy, but democratized. During the 18th and 19th centuries, young Americans learned manners from courtesy books, which gave table pointers such as: Don't chew meat bones while sitting at the table. George Washington copied his famous 110 rules of good conduct from a courtesy book called *Youth's Behavior, or Decency in Conversation*, which was based on a French etiquette book published in 1595, which in turn was based on a 1558 Italian book by Giovanni della Casa, the archbishop of Benevento. From Italy to France to Britain to Virginia, etiquette travelled westward, the manners of the late Renaissance being adapted for the prosperous New Worlder.

The subsequent American books basically took the European emphasis on delicacy, display, and ornateness and simplified it, bringing in a tinge of Puritan modesty and a tinge of Benjamin Franklin practicality. Ideally, this balance meant that the capitalist wasn't a greedy boor, and that the heir to a great fortune wasn't a useless dilettante.

This is a pretty happy set of balances for Americans. We bring energy, egalitarianism, and practicality and have these traits mitigated by the European emphasis on grace, grandeur, and intellect. It would be a shame to think that this balance were coming to an end. I don't want to paint some overbearing picture of a decline into barbarism. The more mundane fear is that our manners will lose whatever polish they have absorbed from European influence. Without that vague sense of social hierarchy so natural to Europeans, every day will be dress-down day. There'll be no hint of deference in any social relations.

Or perhaps, without European influence, we'll no longer model our train stations on grand palaces like Grand Central Station, but will instead build flat terminuses like the newer Penn Station. We'll no longer build inspiring libraries like the original Library of

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Congress, but will instead put up dull buildings like the Library's newer Madison Building. Our moguls will no longer ape Renaissance princes (the way J. P. Morgan and so many others did), but instead their highest ambition will be to buy a football team. Our young men and women will no longer dream of Napoleonic feats of derring-do. Our artists will no longer look at the Old Masters as competitors. Our young lovers will no longer romance along the patterns set down by chivalric tales. Our kids will no longer be inspired by rigorous German or British children's stories, but will rely exclusively on American stories about animals.

Or perhaps our leaders will lose the royal bearing that was developed by generations of European aristocrats. If you skim through the biographies of great Americans—Washington, Lee, Teddy Roosevelt—you notice how closely they studied and imitated European heroes. John F. Kennedy's favorite book was said to be David Cecil's biography of William Lamb, the second viscount Melbourne, who was Queen Victoria's first prime minister. Melbourne was a true aristocrat, and it is easy to see how his aristocratic bearing influenced Kennedy's. Contrast that to Bill Clinton's talk of underwear, Lamar Alexander's shirts, or Bob Dole's new taste for shorts and open-collar shirts.

Or consider what has happened to the academy, the forefront of the battle against Eurocentrism. Until recently American universities were the crowning glories of the Euro-American balance I've been describing. Poor American kids from farms and tenements were admitted to universities built on German models to study history and philosophy according to European theories, and the mixture of Yankee meritocracy and European tradition was golden. By the 1950s, American universities were the finest in the world.

Now the European curriculum is not so central to American curricula. History departments that used to have ten people teaching European history now have fewer. When European classics are studied at all, it is done not in a spirit of reverence (What can we learn from our betters?) but one of condescension (Let us place this work, which is probably oppressive on a number of levels, in its social context by pinning it to the display table like a bug). In the hottest academic disciplines, the European tradition no longer serves even as a model. So it shouldn't be surprising that with those Eurocentric guideposts removed, the trendiest thinkers would spin wildly off into irony, contingency, and unintentional self-parody. It's exciting to break loose from a tradition, but after the initial liberation, the results are usually ugly.

It's impossible to imagine that the American indifference to Europe will continue forever. For 2,000 years Westerners have been inspired and entertained by the evolving tapestry of Western civilization. There's just too much good stuff there for it to be long out of fashion. But how to revive the image of Europe as a living thing in the minds of Americans, not just as some Canada, a place to go on vacation but not to take very seriously?

The conference Margaret Thatcher addressed last

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month in Prague was designed specifically to remedy the widening transatlantic rift. The conference was called the New Atlantic Initiative and was sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, European foundations such as the Brussels-based Centre for the New Europe, and public-spirited American companies such as Pfizer. The moving force behind the gathering was the hyperkinetic editor of *National Review*, John O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan is just about the world's most beloved man, so he was able to attract a very impressive group: Vaclav Havel, Vaclav Klaus, Yegor Gaidar, former Dutch premier Ruud Lubbers, Paul Johnson, and 150 or so other writers, scholars, and ex-officials. The conference was called, the organizers declared, because Europe and the United States are drifting apart. "Our mission at this congress of Prague," the final declaration read, "is to reunite the family of Western civilization and so to ensure its future. There is grave danger that the links among us might be broken again, or gradually erode . . ."

IT'S NO USE EXHORTING AMERICANS TO PAY ATTENTION TO EUROPE. THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING INTERESTING TO PAY ATTENTION TO.

There were a few immediate policy ideas, the most important of which was a call for NATO expansion to central Europe. But the (barely) hidden agenda was more profound. I'd state it this way: to get Americans more involved in Europe in order to work with the Central Europeans to loosen the dirigiste tendencies of the Brussels-dominated European Union; and to get Europeans more involved in America in order to remind Americans that theirs is, primarily, a European civilization.

These are worthy goals. But an essential problem hung over the proceedings. We can design policies to increase Euro-American cooperation. We can expand NATO. We can even build a Transatlantic Free Trade Area. And we should do these things. But will such a set of economic and political relationships have a heart? Will Americans and Europeans feel closely bound to one another by a common past, common problems, and a shared destiny? It doesn't do much good to exhort Americans to pay attention to Europe. There has to be something interesting to pay attention to.

The blunt fact is, there is precious little that reaches out and grabs attention. Europe has done a splendid job of pacifying itself over the past half-century. It has submerged its nationalisms, its messianic proclivities, and its economic differences within a technocratic process headquartered in Brussels, and it has thus neutered many of its passions. In, say, Holland, you can find sexual radicals living next to pre-Enlightenment conservatives, but because the place is so thoroughly secular, these cultural differences don't take the form of culture wars, as ours do. The Europeans have opted for domestic tranquility instead of creative confrontation. As a result, nobody feels that History, in the great big Hegelian sense, is being played out there.

Moreover, few Europeans actually believe in Europe anymore. If you go to continental Europe hoping to encounter a stirring defense of Eurocentrism, you won't find it. The aspects of European civilization that Americans found so useful—the grandeur, the social hierarchy, the aristocratic virtues—have practically no defenders on continental Europe, except among some obnoxious fringe parties. At the Prague conference the Americans defended Eurocentrism far more aggressively than the Europeans did.

When you live in Europe, America is always with you, in the form of popular culture, political controversies, global might, and the outrageous scandals and personalities that titillate the planet. Francis Fukuyama is debated across Europe, Oliver Stone stirs pan-European controversy. Samuel Huntington's articles in *Foreign Affairs* set European pundits to their pens.

But when you leave Europe, as I did two years ago, you leave it utterly. If you are dutiful, you can read up on the progress of monetary union and other EU controversies. But on a day-to-day-basis, there will be almost nothing in your American life to remind you of the contemporary European issues and personalities that formerly concerned you. American multiculturalists have struck blows against Eurocentrism, but the real culprit is Europe itself. Its present is so boring that it has made its past seem less important.

Maybe there will someday be a historical revival, and the Greeks and the Florentines will once again influence American life. Maybe the Central and Eastern Europeans, who are so much more confident and energetic than their Western European counterparts, will rekindle American interest in Europe. But it is hard to see a time soon when the Western European nations will influence American life the way they did from the founding until a few years ago. After centuries of unsteady dependence, we Americans are now estranged from the mother continent. And we're the poorer for it. ♦

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Dick Morris and the Feminists

By Noemie Emery

Busy Dick Morris has several clients. One, President Bill Clinton, is running for reelection on a platform of being tough on crime, friendly to curfews, and sensitive to the problems of women. Another, Alex Kelly, originally of Darien, Conn., and lately of Europe, is trying to stay out of prison after a career as a burglar, addict, and fugitive, having fled the country in 1987 while charged with the forcible rapes of two schoolgirls, then aged 16 and 17. (He has since been charged with a third rape, in 1986 in the Bahamas, of a girl who was 13.) For Bill Clinton, Morris runs focus groups and crafts policy. For Alex Kelly, Morris runs focus groups with an eye toward jury selection, the new form of legal psychological warfare many believe was instrumental in securing a full acquittal in the O.J. Simpson double-murder case.

Who is this other Dick Morris client? Alex Kelly is a one-time high school wrestling champion who in February 1986 was accused, in two remarkably similar stories, by two girls who did not know of each other, of two brutal rapes. Each told of being lured to a car, choked, then threatened with injury, or death. A year later, out on bail, Kelly fled the country and for nine years toured Europe, visiting 15 countries and varied posh hangouts. For a time, while the families of the victims awaited resolution, he lived on an island off Sweden with a stunning blonde he met skiing. According to *Vanity Fair*, Kelly's lawyer is planning an "aggressive" defense, based on the claim that the girls asked for it. "He indicates that he will also call eyewitnesses who will testify to the effect that the Stamford girl was 'chasing' Kelly at the party prior to the assault," wrote Jennet Conant in the magazine's February 1996 issue.

Kelly deserves a fair trial, as does everybody. But what is stunning is the response to Morris's work for a young man who, at the very least, was a carefree fugitive from justice for eight years. It is useful to recall the furor in 1990 when Clayton Williams, then the Republican candidate for governor of Texas, made a silly comment comparing rape to bad weather: "When rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it," he said, uttering a dense, time-worn cliché. This was widely taken as condoning rape, if not actively urging it, and brought with it a media onslaught, augmented by pickets from NOW. Today, NOW pickets are not in evidence at the White House. And what are the feminists saying? "Of course, ordinarily, in a case like this, the Democratic women would be yelping, but there was only the occasional brave mutter," wrote Maureen Dowd on May 23. "One Democratic lawmaker explained, 'If this were a Republican president, and Dick Morris were helping an accused rapist, you know we would be screaming. But it's not worth picking a fight.'"

Some months ago, Admiral Richard C. Macke said that three sailors accused of raping an Okinawan girl should have hired a prostitute instead. This was denounced as untenable, and the admiral was fired, to feminist cheering. But that was the Navy, whose culture must be "cracked," as Rep. Pat Schroeder said recently. What of the culture of the White House under Clinton and Morris? Where is Pat Schroeder on this? Where are Barbara Boxer and Carol Moseley-Braun, for that matter? And what of feminist and Clinton campaign aide Ann Lewis? In a televised interview, she defended Morris's acts as justified and legitimate.

Liberal feminists have so corrupted "sensitivity" issues that they have ceased to exist as anything more than campaign weaponry used to bludgeon political enemies, even as partisan friends are shielded from attack. The charge does not count, the "crime" does not count, nor do the interests of victims. What does count is the accused and his partisan leanings. A pro-life conservative can be taken apart for a word, or reports of one. A pro-choice Republican can be shielded, until no longer so needed. A pro-choice Democrat, married to a feminist icon, is forgiven anything. Women—schoolchildren—are tossed overboard for his sake.

Two other cases suggest that this is part of a theme. In 1970, Bob Packwood emerged as a feminist leader on the strength of his pro-choice credentials. He was

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not merely pro-choice in the sense most would define it; he did not believe that abortion was sometimes the lesser of evils and should be discouraged, if not legally penalized. Rather, he seemed an abortion fanatic, driven instead to *promote* the procedure, to think it was not used *enough*. As such, he attained cult status at the icy cold core of the movement and used that as the base for his national power. But at the same time that he was dining *à deux* with Gloria Steinem (and using her to write his fund-raising letters), he was physically and verbally assaulting young women and using his staff aides as pimps. "Packwood often directed his advances toward young women, in entry-level slots, who were emotionally and financially vulnerable," writes Mark Kirschmeier in his study of him. "Many, after run-ins with Packwood, reacted with shame, self-doubt, and, most important, silence. They feared retaliation after leaving Packwood's employ." It was not only fear (which was justified) that silenced them, but political interests. In 1982, in the midst of an abortion filibuster, Packwood suddenly attacked a female lobbyist, who fought him off, but . . . kept silent, continuing afterwards to work with him, to the point of considering a job in his office. She was forced, Kirschmeier writes, to make a "soul-searching decision: should she defend her feelings, or her cause?" She defended her cause, as did others, and exposed other women to Packwood's excesses. But what would she have done had he been on the other side?

In the end, Kirschmeier says, the sisters were used: "Packwood never saw the feminist movement as anything more than a device to advance his career." But that was how the sisters saw him. Through the Reagan-Bush years, he was crucial to feminists as a hedge against Republican executive action. "But with a pro-choice president, they no longer needed a pro-choice senator as much. At least some feminists decided that Packwood's behavior was now more important—and more useful (to them) than his vote."

Case No. 2 concerns President Clinton, who in 1992 supplanted Bob Packwood as the premier male feminist, riding the wave of the Hill-Thomas furor as he campaigned with female candidates across the land. His wife attended an American Bar Association meeting that year in Hill's honor, where she exclaimed: "We must never again shy from raising our voices. . . . All women who care about equal opportunity—about integrity and morality . . . are in Professor Anita Hill's debt." Sure enough, a year later, another woman raised hers: a lower-level employee of the state of Arkansas who claimed that late in 1991 then-Governor Clinton had propositioned her during a state conference at a Little Rock hotel. How do the Hill and the Paula Jones claims stack up against each other? Let the liberals speak. "The most important differences between the cases of Hill and Jones speak well for Jones," ran a *New Republic* editorial. "Jones's alleged harassment is three years old—not ten. Jones told six people. . . . Jones's accusation is also graver. . . . It's also better substantiated, with clear, simultaneous confirmations of her distress." Wrote Jacob Weisberg in *New York*: "This one is far worse. . . . Thomas, remember, was never accused of doing anything more odious than talking dirty and very weirdly to Anita Hill, . . . and Hill never claimed that Thomas tried to punish her for resisting his advances. Indeed, Hill has recently been at pains to point out that she never charged Thomas with legal sexual harassment at all."

In the face of this, the only people who found Jones less credible were Hill's hard-core and knee-jerk supporters: the liberal caucuses, Anna Quindlen, and NOW. "Taking the charge seriously doesn't mean taking every accuser seriously," said columnist Ellen Goodman. "I know if Bill were just another Joe, she would have trouble getting a lawyer. It's not clear if even her version fits the charges of harassment or 'intentional infliction of emotional distress.'"

It is with those in, or close to, this White House that things truly get nasty. Wrote the *New Republic*: "Privately, Washington liberals are already pronouncing her, in the words of one, 'a little *kurva*'" (the Yiddish word for whore). Clinton lawyer Bob Bennett called her charge "tabloid trash," translated easily into "trailer trash," a theme picked up by adviser James Carville to knit the two charges together. "I know these people. . . . I spent nights with them," he said to reporters. "You drag $100 bills through trailer parks . . . there's no telling what you'll find." My word. "Carville may get high marks for attacking your attacker," Mark Shields wrote in his column, "but what he said was nothing less than a belittling of working women of modest means and a class put-down that went unanswered and unremarked on by the usually vocal feminists in and out of Congress." Shields added, "What was all that moving feminist rhetoric about our treating human beings as ends rather than means?"

What and where was it? Rendered "inactive," unhelpful to current intentions. But what Shields takes merely as tactical reflex in fact is a conscious design. In the *Washington Post*, Nina Burleigh explains it: "How does a man who claims to hold women in high regard explain away what seems to be chauvinistic exploitation of women? Simple: make the accusers

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out to be pitiable 'bimbos,' who, for reasons of politics or money, lie. . . . According to this strategy, conceived by Betsey Wright before the inner circle did her in, Clinton maintains his image among professional women, by separating off the 'bimbos' as spindle-heeled opportunists with 'big hair.'" Right. The party of the vulnerable, of the working classes and women, is waging war on working, lower-middle-class women in the interests of powerful men.

But it is precisely these "bimbos," sans clout or connections, who need protection the most. If the *New Republic*, Clarence Page, Richard Cohen, and others claim she deserves a fair hearing *in spite* of her class and her manner, Katherine Boo and Christopher Georges, writing in the *Washington Post*, have the wit to realize that she needs a fair hearing *because* of them. "What common sense suggests, studies like those of the federal government's Merit Systems Protections Board confirm: The lowly are far more likely to be harassed and otherwise abused than [National Abortion Rights Action League] executives and naval officers. If you were a randy executive, who would you drop your drawers for? Probably not a pillar of the corporation. Conversely, who will crumple faster under a barrage of sexual harassment, or an onslaught of spin? . . . Whores can be raped, the poor can be robbed, lowlives can be insulted—and they are, pretty much, all the time. Arkansas typists, if anyone, deserve a little benefit of our doubt until they get their day in court. But today we bestow our tolerance most generously on women who need it least. We don't bestow it on the likes of Paula Jones."

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Unless, of course, she happens to accuse a conservative, in which case her class status would be used to make her appealingly vulnerable; and the accused would be twice pilloried. As Shields writes, "Would there have been such lamblike silence if a Republican politician . . . had criticized Anita Hill in such locker-room language? Or could it be that outrage is selective, and has something to do not simply with the woman being denigrated, but with the politics and ideology of the political man?" It not only *could* be. It *is*.

In private, the feminist argument in favor of the partisan use of feminist issues might go something like this: It is better for *all* women that *some* women should suffer, if it helps keep supporters of the current welfare system, quotas, and legalized abortion in office. The problem is that most women don't think so. Women dislike quotas, even for women. They know the welfare system is broken. And while women, just like men, oppose an absolute legal ban on abortion by a nine-to-one margin, the consensus dissolves after that. Most women who favor (some) legal abortion also want it confined and discouraged, subject to the sort of restraints and restrictions the Clintons and Packwoods oppose. By contrast, the percentage of women who don't want to be raped, harassed Packwood-style, or propositioned in hotels by randy governors must be close to 100 percent. Feminists are selling out the real concerns of all women in favor of "rights" most don't favor. Which is not yet the worst they have done.

Bias is serious. Harassment (the real kind) is serious. Rape is dead serious—as most men, if not Morris, know. But their rackety approach to these serious issues has retarded the use of one serious standard and reduced them to objects of spin. Few can take seriously—if one could, ever—the things that these women now say. All feminist women—women Democrats, women in Congress, women spin doctors on the White House payroll; all women who rallied to Anita Hill, as the symbol of a war against a sinister mindset; who campaigned for the bill against violence against women; who complained about Tailhook, Clayton Williams, or insensitivity as demonstrated by conservative people—should be challenged to declare their view about Dick Morris's work for Alex Kelly and his continuing employment by Bill Clinton, *in a manner commensurate with their responses on other occasions*. If

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they refuse, they should be asked why they should not then be branded as phonies, willing to throw vulnerable women—schoolgirls and low-ranking clerical workers—over the sides of their political vessel in the interests of powerful men: entrenched and ambitious male politicians, millionaire political consultants, and runaway filthy-rich jocks. The president might be urged to share in the pain of the Darien victims. As for those self-declared wardens of feminine interests, from Pat Schroeder and Ann Lewis to Hillary Clinton herself, anyone dense enough to appeal to their mercies will surely deserve what she gets. ♦

What Pro-Choice Republicans Believe

By Tucker Carlson

Bob Dole's last day in Congress should have amounted to an uninterrupted string of photo opportunities and warmly reminiscent speeches. Instead, he picked a fight with members of his own party. In a TV interview, Dole attacked conservative Republicans—one of them, Gary Bauer, by name—who had questioned his recent decision to include a statement in the Republican plank on abortion welcoming divergent views. "I don't know where these people come from," an exasperated Dole wondered aloud.

Dole's comments surprised even his own aides and, barring anything short of an apology, virtually guaranteed what could be an ugly floor fight over abortion at the Republican convention in August. But Dole did not act irrationally. Supporters of legalized abortion are an increasingly outspoken force in the Republican party—more powerful than they have been in 20 years.

We know what pro-lifers believe: They believe abortion is the taking of a human life. What, exactly, do the newly energized pro-choice Republicans believe?

"I believe we need to make the platform a big-tent platform, all inclusive," says Sen. Arlen Specter, launching into his well-rehearsed position on abortion and the future of the Republicans. "I think we need both Pat Buchanan and Christie Whitman." Specter's words come out seamlessly, without passion, as if recited from a text he memorized long ago. Seemingly on cue, he adds the obligatory disclaimer: "I think it's very important to make the point that I'm not pro-abortion. I'm personally very much opposed to abortion. I just don't think the government can control it." The procedure, he continues, is "a bad practice. I think that it's something that is preferable not to do. But I think it's a matter of personal determination. I think it's up to the family, the woman, with input from ministers, rabbis, priests."

But *why* is he personally opposed to abortion?

Specter stops cold. Eighteen seconds of uncomfortable silence pass. The senator has spent much of the past year talking incessantly about abortion—he based an entire presidential campaign on his pro-choice views—yet he seems baffled by the question, as if he has never heard it before, or even imagined it could be asked.

When Specter finally replies, his tone has changed. He speaks through clenched teeth: "Well, it is something I would not choose to do. And I would just leave it at that."

And Specter does leave it at that. Asked to elaborate on his views, he angrily refuses: "I think it says all there is to say that I'm opposed to it. Now, do you have another question?"

Coming from a former prosecutor accustomed to making and defending rational arguments, it is not much of an answer. But it may be all the answer Arlen Specter has. Like other pro-choice Republicans, Specter has staked out a position on abortion—personally opposed, but against government restrictions—that is difficult, maybe impossible, to defend as a species of logic. And indeed, Specter and others rarely do defend it. Instead, pro-choice Republicans toss out phrases—"intensely personal decision," "intimate religious conviction"—designed to throw squeamish constituents and reporters off the subject. Or they do not respond at all: *Now, do you have another question?* As a

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temporary rhetorical stopgap, it works. It does not amount to a sustainable political position.

Pro-choice Democrats have it a lot easier. In a party that officially sanctions abortion, pro-choice Democrats often can afford to take a logically defensible position on the subject, and the more outspoken among them do: The fetus, they argue, is merely a piece of tissue, an appendage that belongs wholly to the woman in whose body it resides. An abortion, by this reasoning, is no more morally significant than an appendectomy, and a lot safer. The procedure can even be, as pro-choice theorist Beverly Harrison argues, a "positive good," a "loving choice." "I would say that early abortion is a matter of relative indifference, given that we terminate all forms of life," says Harrison, a professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary. (Harrison also defends infanticide: "Under certain circumstances it is not a great wrong," she explained in a recent interview. "I mean, have you read Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for which she got the Nobel Prize? There are many situations in which women kill their children out of mercy. . . . Who's to judge these things?") Whatever else they are, strongly pro-choice Democrats are capable of fielding a consistent position on abortion.

Pro-choice Republicans are in a tougher position. Unable or unwilling to make the fetus-as-lump-of-flesh argument, they are left defending the right to abortion, while insisting that, personally, they find the practice repugnant, or at least the subject of an Agonizing Personal Decision. Yet it is hard to see why abortion should in any way be a repugnant choice, or even a particularly agonizing one, if it is *not* somehow the taking of a human life. (Some pro-choicers respond by arguing that *all* medical decisions are agonizing, though there doesn't seem to be much moral controversy surrounding the choice of cancer patients to undergo chemotherapy, or of syphilitics to take penicillin.) And if abortion *is* the taking of a human life, even just a developing life, then it becomes difficult to argue that government should not strictly regulate it, if not make it illegal. Pro-choice Republicans, in other words, are in a philosophical bind. And it shows.

Ann Stone, chairman of Republicans for Choice and one of the most visible critics of the party's official stand against abortion, explains that although she supports the right of others to have the procedure, "For myself, I wouldn't choose it." And why is that? She falls back on reasoning that is painfully circular. "Because it's not a procedure I would choose," Stone says, explaining that, "I have this nurturing thing in me."

And that is Stone's response to an easy question. She does less well when the scenarios get tougher. Asked where she stands on abortion for the purpose of sex selection, Stone doesn't hesitate. "Of course I'd be against it," she says, "it's the wrong reason to have an abortion." How come? Well, she says, in most instances in which the sex of the child is a criterion for abortion, the aborted fetuses are female. "I'm a woman," says Stone. "I want to see more women in the world. I'd hate to think that my gender is being obliterated."

Arne Carlson doesn't even get that far. "I don't understand the purpose of this question," replies the agitated Republican governor of Minnesota when asked about his views on abortion. Although Carlson has taken a vigorous pro-choice position during his 20 years in public life, he refuses to say where he stands on the subject personally. "I'm not going to give you my personal opinion," Carlson growls, demanding to know why his aides had not prepared him for such a query. "Politely, it's none of your goddamn business. I don't ask you about your sex life with your wife. My personal view is not what's germane."

What is germane, says Carlson, is his political position on abortion. Except here, too, the governor seems unable to muster much of a defense of the pro-choice stand. "I agree with a woman's right to make that decision," Carlson explains. "Whether I agree with her decision or not is irrelevant. I agree with the right of a man to choose his school. That does not mean I agree with the chosen school. It is your right to go to a school and pick a box of soap. I may not pick that same box of soap, but I believe in the right of choice." His position on "this in-depth philosophical issue" as clear as it may ever be, Carlson signs off in a huff.

Not all pro-choice Republicans share Carlson's fondness for non sequiturs, though almost all use at least one of his arguments to defend their position: Abortion, they contend, is a deeply personal matter (or as Sen. Alan Simpson puts it, "personally a deep, deep intimate personal decision"). As such, it is by definition beyond the scope of politicians to judge—particularly Republican politicians, who have traditionally espoused a smaller role for government and maximum liberty for individuals. Bob Dole, though generally opposed to abortion, came close to ceding as much when he explained why he thought the platform should be changed. Abortion, Dole told CNN, "is a moral issue, it's not like all the other things in the platform." Precisely because it is a moral issue, Dole seemed to imply, Republicans should not take an inflexible position on it. This is a seductive argument, perhaps the only one pro-choice Republicans have.

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But when applied to abortion it quickly becomes indefensible.

Which does not prevent pro-choice Republicans from employing it, since the argument provides a handy dodge. By this line of reasoning, legislators don't have to take a stand on the sticky particulars of abortion, made even stickier by recent improvements in fetal photography. Instead, they're covered by higher principle. "Whether [the fetus] is human life or not, that's irrelevant to my position on the issue," says Rep. John Porter, a nine-term Republican from Illinois. "I may think so for myself and yet that is irrelevant to my making policy for the country." Porter's colleague, Jim Kolbe of Arizona, while admittedly uncomfortable with abortion, is similarly unwilling to allow his moral views to inform his politics—though, unlike Porter, he does seem willing to impose his personal convictions in some cases: "There can be no doubt in my mind that at the birth of the child the state has a right to step in and be protective," says Kolbe resolutely.

Few, however, are willing to extend the stock pro-choice defense as far as Rep. Jim Greenwood. Greenwood, a Republican from Pennsylvania, readily concedes that abortion constitutes the taking of a human life. "Of course" it does, he says without pause. Yet Greenwood, who voted against the recent bill to ban partial-birth abortions, is adamant that government cannot in any significant way restrict the practice. How does an otherwise sensible legislator find himself admitting that abortion is the killing of human beings, while simultaneously arguing that he has no right to do anything about it? By citing the Constitution, which Greenwood says "tells us to be limited in the degree to which we use the power of the state." Needless to say, Greenwood does not apply the same hands-off standard to other deeply personal choices individuals make to commit violence, such as rape or drive-by shootings.

If it seems strange to hear politicians—who spend their professional lives passing judgment on every conceivable idea and behavior—aghast at the notion of making even elementary judgments about abortion, it's even stranger to hear some of the country's most liberal Republicans suddenly wax rhapsodic about the beauties of small government. "I feel that one of the major tenets of the Republican party is individual freedom and liberties, and less government is better," says Rep. Connie Morellà of Maryland. Or at least less government is better when it comes to regulating abortion. In other instances, maybe not. Moments after laying out her credentials as a Jeffersonian, Morella explains that although government should not interfere with abortion, it should increase funding for a comprehensive variety of "programs that are going to help children before they're born and after they're born," including the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program and other pillars of the welfare state. So much for the stand against big government.

Despite their weak arguments, it would be a mistake to suppose that pro-choice Republicans don't have good reasons for their opinions, or that their position on abortion is always simply a political calculation. Many, like Susan Cullman, chairman of the Republican Coalition for Choice, believe passionately that legal abortion is not only a potentially winning issue for Republicans, but a net gain for the country. As Cullman, whose group is now working to remove the anti-abortion plank from the party's platform, explains it, abortion is an unpleasant choice. On the other hand, it can also have important social consequences. For instance, says Cullman, a woman weighing abortion should carefully consider whether the child she may produce is "going to be cared for or loved or in any way a contributing member of society."

In any way a contributing member of society. Cullman seems like a well-meaning enough person, so it's likely she is not even aware of the implications of statements like this one. Yet the suspicion remains that, among some pro-choice Republicans (and, for that matter, Democrats), abortion is considered an efficient instrument with which to weed out those deemed unlikely to become contributing members of society. Or as William F. Buckley, Jr. put it not long ago, many upper-crust pro-choicers see abortion as "a good way to keep down the population, a lot of which is headed for the underclass"—"a tactful way to limit the number of blacks who are born in the United States."

Buckley's claims immediately drew howls of outraged protest from supporters of abortion. But it is hard to deny that some of what he said is true. While polls consistently demonstrate that the majority of the Republican rank and file opposes abortion except in the usual extenuating circumstances (rape, incest, threat to the life of the mother), affluent Republicans—the party's donor class—appear to be much more enthusiastically pro-choice. Some of that enthusiasm, it seems clear, stems from the belief that since abortion rates are highest in inner cities, legal abortion results in fewer indolent ghetto dwellers whose presence drains the country's economy: abortion as the price of hope, growth, and opportunity.

Such positions are no longer publicly acceptable, but they are hardly new. According to conservative author Marvin Olasky, who has written widely on the

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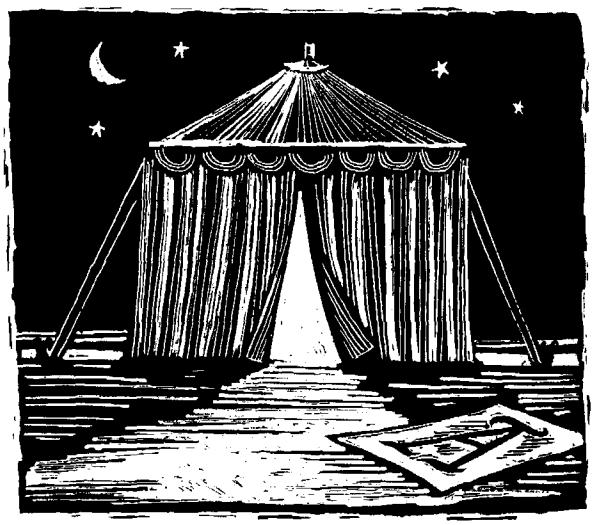
history of abortion, "the Republican party has always had a social Darwinist component." Indeed, Margaret Sanger herself, the population-control enthusiast who first popularized eugenics among socially prominent women 70 years ago, was a registered Republican and ended her days, according to her grandson, Alex Sanger, a devoted Goldwater fan. (Goldwater, for his part, returned the affection.) "My grandmother always got more support from Republicans than from Democrats," says Sanger. "She was infuriated with Franklin Roosevelt and the inner-city Catholic Democrats in his coalition"—many of whom, not surprisingly, objected to Mrs. Sanger's efforts to cleanse America of the "lower orders" using abortion and birth control. As late as the early 1970s in some places, Republicans (including George and Barbara Bush) remained in the visible leadership of the pro-choice movement. Years before *Roe* v. *Wade*, for example, it was a Republican-controlled legislature that gave New York some of the most liberal abortion laws in the country.


Neil Shigley

All of which helps explain why some pro-choice Republicans appear baffled by the strength of the anti-abortion wing of their party. "I'd love to see the whole abortion issue taken out of the platform," says Connecticut governor John Rowland wistfully, in a tone that indicates he is still wondering how it got there in the first place. Gov. Arne Carlson agrees: "I've regurgitated my position [on abortion] for 20 years. When is it going to go away?" From the not-unreasonable point of view of Republicans like Rowland and Carlson, bringing the party back to a pro-choice (or noncommittal) position on abortion would not rate as a departure from tradition, but instead a return to it.

Not to mention a good political move. A growing number of Republican governors claim to have become convinced that the party cannot maintain wide appeal with an anti-abortion plank intact. "I think it's important for the Republican party to send the message that we are inclusive, that we are welcoming," Massachusetts governor William Weld told the *New York Times* in May. "The best way to send that message is to take the plank out. That's what [governors] Whitman, Wilson and I all think. It's great for Bob Dole. It's great for Republicans up and down the ticket, including me, as a candidate."

Weld's view may be more a self-interested calculation based on the sentiments of his own pro-choice constituency than an accurate reading of Republicans nationally. Or he may be right. Either way, pro-choice Republicans aren't likely to achieve their intended reforms within the party—much less be taken seriously as people with legitimate ideas—until they come up with some real arguments to support their position. Don't believe it? Just ask Sen. Alan Simpson.

Simpson, who retires this year, has long been one of the Senate's most energetic supporters of abortion. During a hearing late last year, for example, Simpson broke with most of his colleagues and emotionally denounced the partial-birth ban as "very wily, very crafty, very manipulative, very diabolical," merely a "disguise to stop abortion." His credentials as a pro-choice Republican, in other words, could not be stronger. Nor could his reputation as a rhetorician, a master debater, and all-around sharp guy. Ask Simpson about his position on abortion, however, and the response is not so much an argument as an explosion of hostile defensiveness. "What are you writing about?" he demands. "What are you up to? If you're just going to get into killing babies, I'm not into that, I've never done that."

Ultimately Simpson cools, but his reasoning remains fuzzy. "I don't even know why men should vote on abortion," says Simpson. As for his own views, Simpson has this to say: "I have always been pro-choice. I've been living with the same woman I started with 42 years ago. I have three wonderful children. I'm a loving person."

And so one of America's staunchest and most articulate pro-choice Republicans defends his position. The arguments might not make sense, might not even exist in a strict sense. But the implication is, trust me anyway: *I'm a loving person.*

So far pro-choice Republicans have gotten by with answers like these. Sooner or later, they won't be enough. ♦

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Are Asian-Americans the New Jews?

By Christopher Caldwell

Since the 1989 publication of Amy Tan's enormously popular *The Joy Luck Club*, "a substantial literary sub-genre has emerged," according to literary critic Jonathan Yardley, "to rival the fiction from the 1950s and 1960s by Bellow, Malamud, Roth et al." Yardley is not the only writer to compare the recent boomlet of novels and short-story collections about the Asian-American experience to the Jewish-American literary explosion four decades ago. The trend was ready-made for the cultural moment, because Asian-Americans have something to offer everybody. There's a collision of Western culture and non-Western tradition; families that appear functional but feel dysfunctional; and an ever-present language barrier at a time when the "problem of language" is becoming more and more central to the art of fiction.

There are Chinese-American writers, Japanese-American writers, Korean-American writers. They have one fascinating commonality: Their first novels tend to be not so much autobiographical as genealogical, dealing more with the lives of their parents than their own. The boomlet is now old enough that its authors have produced second and third novels. Tan has published *The Hundred Secret Senses* and *The Kitchen God's Wife*. And two of the writers who garnered the most praise in her footsteps, Gish Jen and Gus Lee, have come out this spring with their second and third novels, respectively.

Jen's *Mona in the Promised Land* (Knopf, 320 pages, $24) treats the children of the Chinese refugees who figured in her 1991 *Typical American*. In a suburb that resembles Scarsdale, young Mona gets swept up in the ethnic consciousness of the late 1960s. Mona loses her virginity to a hippie boyfriend who lives in a tepee on his parents' lawn; takes one of her parents' "exploited" black restaurant workers into the family home as a clandestine lodger; and winds up converting to Judaism. The net effect of the book is not to poke fun at ethnic preoccupations but to exalt them, yet the book is saved from multicultural mushiness by moments of ruthless satire, as in the point-scoring system that the Scarsdale children (black, Jewish, and Asian) resort to when they try to rank the victimizations of their respective parents. It's a respectable effort at a writer's-program slice-of-suburban-life novel, but since Jen is incapable of writing straight, it's a slog getting through its 320 pages.

Lee's *Tiger's Tail* (Knopf, 298 pages, $24) is a thriller about Chinese-American military lawyer Jackson Tan, drunkenly remorseful over his combat experiences in Vietnam. Tan goes undercover in Korea in 1974 to find his best friend, another lawyer who has disappeared while looking into the theft of nuclear materials. He battles a corrupt, Kurtz-like army captain and has a lot of hard-boiled adventures with prostitutes and enlisted men. The dialogue is movie-inspired and stilted, in a she-had-a-pair-o'-gams-that-just-wouldn't-quit style. The whole novel resembles a cross between Tom Clancy and Damon Runyon:

> "Said I'd get the clap running with a harlot. He said, Is that all you can be? A whoremonger? He pulled out an M-16 with a short barrel." A CAR-15, an Armalite cousin to the M-16, prone to jams.

It's a good page-turning beach book. Like *Mona in the Promised Land*, it is better than the run-of-the-mill novels in its genre, but no one would confuse *Tiger's Tail* with *The Adventures of Augie March*, unless he were trying to make the case for an Asian literary Renaissance.

So there is a disparate bunch of relatively decent Asian-American writers out there with one or two things in common. But if Asian-Americans *were* our generation's equivalent of Philip Roth & Co., how would we know it? How does one ethnic group come to embody the fictional aspirations of an entire big, diverse country? Two possibilities suggest themselves: the first is a turn of ethnic character that gives a people a gift for a particular type of storytelling. Saul Bellow, writing in 1963, discerned in various works from Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav to Sholom Aleichem to Grace Paley a "Jewish attitude," in which "laughter and trembling are so curiously mingled that it is not easy to determine the relations of the two." True, perhaps, but that's nothing a contemporary writer would own up to. In the three decades since Bellow wrote those words, the idea that any race has any specific cultural aptitudes has come to be seen as untenable, even revolting—as Bellow himself found out when he was widely reviled for asking, "Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I'd be glad to read him."

A second possibility: Fiction is a

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moral art, and certain groups can be, for historical reasons, uniquely well-placed to recount the moral conflicts of an era—Puritans in 17th-century England, rationalists in pre-revolutionary France, youths in the wake of World War I. Jews, victims in the preeminent moral event of modern times, certainly fitted that description in the wake of World War II. And that is not all. As Leslie Fiedler wrote of the 40s and 50s, "It was also a time of growing alienation and rapid urbanization, which made the Jews, experts on exile and the indignities of city life, appropriate spokesmen for everyone."

Now *this* is an argument for the Asian-American novel's importance that several important Asian-American writers clearly countenance. Unfortunately the new reality within which they see Asian-Americans as "appropriate spokesmen for everyone" is multiculturalism. "Asian American literature celebrates the culturally diverse nature of American society," the critic Qun Wang tells us—as if there's a literature in any culture that "celebrates" social drabness. In her well-received 1994 anthology *Charlie Chan is Dead* (Penguin, 569 pages, $14.95), the Filipina fiction writer Jessica Hagedorn summed up Asian-American writing as a reaction to "stereotypes" from the movies and an attempt "to challenge the long-cherished concepts of a xenophobic literary canon dominated by white heterosexual males." Of her own writer's awakening, she writes, "With no real idea of myself as postcolonial Filipino, Asian American, or as a female person of mixed descent, but armed with this new and disturbing inspiration, I began to seriously write and read. . . . In spite of my political ignorance, I was blissfully driven to put word to paper."

That is, she didn't know the first thing about fiction—the first thing being radical politics. In an introduction to the same volume, Berkeley professor of Asian-American studies Elaine Kim writes:

Gus Lee

Gish Jen

Chas Fagan

> A century and a half of persistent and deeply rooted racist inscriptions in both official and mass literary culture in the United States perpetuated grotesque representations of Asian Americans as alien Others, whether as sinister villains, dragon ladies, brute hordes, helpless heathens, comical servants, loyal sidekicks, Suzy Wongs or wily asexual detectives. . . . Our strategy was to assert a self-determined Asian American identity.

Leave aside that much of what is most delightful in Gus Lee's work is the playing with stereotypes of black street criminals, bouncy Hispanics, Charlie-Chan-like Asians, and whites of both the loutish and the bleeding-heart varieties, or that ethnic stereotypes are the whole of the raw material of Jen's second novel. Asian-American literature, in Kim's view, must be examined strategically and politically.

That's an extremely limiting view, and the debate, if it can be called such, has moved on from there. Probably the preeminent theorist of multiculturalism, Asian-American-style, is David Mura, whose second memoir, *Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality & Identity* (Anchor Books, 272 pages, $22.95), is out this month. What can you say about a Japanese-American writer who, although he has received two NEA grants, takes his inspiration from the racial terrorist Frantz Fanon? Much of the book is given over to autoerotic reminiscences and to passages in which David Mura observes David Mura being moral. (One is reminded of the ridiculous line in the REM song, "That's me in the spotlight . . . losing my religion.")

The book is something of a literary manifesto, in which the most important tendency is a racial conception of identity, yoked to a deadly serious indictment of American racism. Mura thinks of himself as a "man of color," evincing a Hagedornian equation of victim status and artistic prerogative. It's thus not surprising that the internment of the Japanese-Americans during World War II is set up as a creation myth: "In the camps, with their communal toilets and showers and barracks, there was little privacy; in an effort to work around such close quarters, the fulfilling of sexual urges entered a zone of muffling. Did this engender a further silencing around sexuality?" The "strategy" here is to use the internment

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camps to jostle aside the concentration camps as the century's central moral reference point.

What sort of novels would result from Mura's view of the role of ethnicity in the writer's calling? Probably ones very much like *What the Scarecrow Said* (HarperCollins/ReganBooks, 449 pages, $24) by the Japanese-American Stewart David Ikeda, a book made to be read not for pleasure or enlightenment but as a starting point for ethnic whining in the classroom. Its plot concerns the attempts of the immigrant William Fujita to recapture for a group of New England progressive farmers the indignities of . . . the internment camps, of course. But it also has many of the trappings of socialist realism (we might call the genre "multiculturalist realism")—like a reproduction of George Bush's letter of apology to Japanese-American internees and a bevy of pedantic footnotes. Here's one:

> During the war, Japanese Americans and others regularly hyphenated the term [Japanese-American], rendering it a compound noun—a person other than an American, a third thing—in keeping with the popular perception of that group by other Americans and, unfortunately, themselves.
>
> Amid today's purported tyranny of so-called political correctness, my concern is with linguistic correctness—it is with accuracy—and this is the style standard I've applied to this novel. Of course, mere grammar does not comprise conscience, tolerance, equality, etc. today any more than it did in WW II.

Great.

There's no question that Asians are reading one another's work with enthusiasm and curiosity: To cite just the authors under review, for instance, Amy Tan blurbs Gish Jen, Gish Jen quotes David Mura, and David Mura blurbs Stewart Ikeda.

But in the end, there *is* no distinctive school of Asian-American fiction, and it would be a bad thing if there were. Because "schools" are formed much less spontaneously than they used to be, and it is more likely than not that ethnic literary coteries will be based less on a shared probing of nettlesome questions than a shared political program, an attempt to garland a culture around an already-erected trellis of conventional wisdom.

In a sense, these writers are not to blame. It's often said that American blacks flocked to cities looking for manufacturing jobs just as manufacturing was replaced by a service economy and ended up in underclass ghettoes. Similarly, Asian-American writers risk being ghettoized for having, through no fault of their own, sought to make their mark on American fiction at the very point it was being marginalized by multiculturalism, television, and the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. ♦

Books

WICKER'S TRAGIC FAILING

By David Frum

As a columnist for the *New York Times*, Tom Wicker stood for 25 years among America's preeminent liberal journalists. What he said in the thousands of pieces he has published since the mid-1960s, he is saying again in *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America* (Morrow, 218 pages, $25). It is as if none of the ideas that have transformed American thinking about race in the past quarter century has reached Wicker in his writer's lodge in Rochester, Vt.

Reading *Tragic Failure* is a peculiarly claustrophobic experience, like a weekend in colonial Williamsburg or Nantucket. Fully one-quarter of the footnotes in the book refer the reader to articles in the *New York Times*. It's jarring to put it down and return to the contemporary world of e-mail, personal computers, and 1997 model year cars. The book isn't a defense of liberalism, because it won't engage with any of the conservative critique of liberalism. It is rather a restatement of the ancient liberal truths—not one word has been added, not one word has been taken away.

Wicker's world is the world of *Eyes on the Prize*. Blacks are always noble—but also pathetic and powerless. Whites are always smug and callous—but also securely in control. In Wicker's world, blacks can flourish only when whites help them and must fail when whites do not. One anecdote in the book sums this whole world up. In the early 1980s, Vernon Jordan attempted to enter a Florida bar and was shut out by the woman at the front door. Meanwhile, a group of whites was admitted. Jordan reminded the woman of the 1964 Civil Rights Act; she told him she didn't care. Wicker reports that Jordan concluded that the woman at the bar had been encouraged indirectly by "what she heard coming out of Washington"—that is, from the Reagan administration. End of story.

One wants to ask: And then? What did Vernon Jordan, superlawyer, multimillionaire, friend of presidents and governors, corporate

Contributing editor David Frum's new collection of essays, What's Right, *is now out in hardcover from BasicBooks.*

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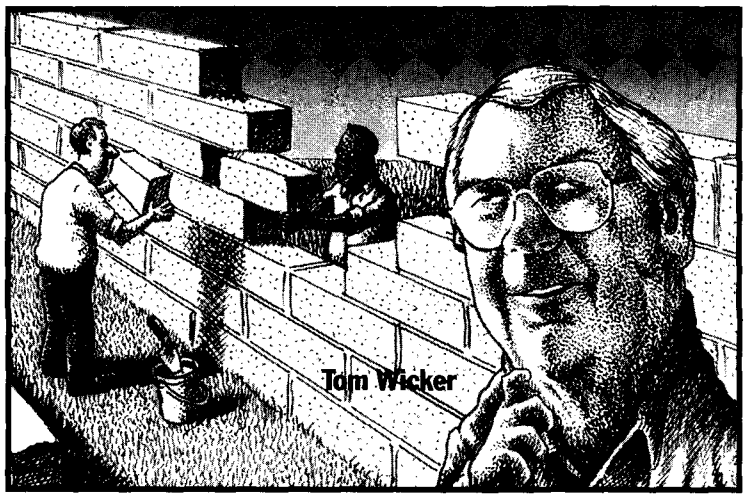
director, backed by all the civil-rights statutes of the United States and by the full rigor of Florida's tort law, do then? What did the governor of the state and the mayor of the city do? And what happened to the minimum-wage bigot who affronted him? If I were Vernon Jordan, I'm not sure I'd appreciate a telling of this story that represents me as a pitiful victim, and the clerk at the bar as a member of the ruling class. If I were Jordan, it would occur to me that it's not just the bigot at the bar who will never be able to see me as anything but just another black—it's also some of those who regard themselves as my friends.

Nobody doubts that incidents like the one described by Jordan to Wicker still occur in America, as do subtler forms of discrimination throughout the labor and housing markets. But it does seem rather incredible that anyone could write a book at century's end about America's racial dilemmas on the assumption that discrimination plain and simple—what Wicker condemns as whites' "fear or hostile instincts about black neighbors or employees or schoolmates or job competitors"—is the sole, or even most important, cause of America's racial troubles and black America's economic and moral plight.

Is it really racial discrimination that accounts for black illegitimacy and crime rates? If so, why are those problems worse today than they were forty years ago? Is it really racial discrimination that explains why the percentage of black men enrolled in college has not increased in a decade, despite a vast network of implicit and explicit racial preferences? These are polemical points, it's true, and they've been made so often before that it's tedious to read them again. But Wicker shows no sign that he's ever encountered them or that, if he did, he would take them seriously.

"I consider it the saddest racial development of the last quarter century," he writes, "that as the black middle class expanded, the urban underclass grew even faster."



Sean Delonas

Conservatives agree that this development is sad—but they think they understand the linkage between the two phenomena. Driving the growth of the black middle class has been the expansion of government, especially state and local government. The 12 percent of America's population that is black provides 20 percent of the employees of state and local governments, 17 percent of federal employees, and more than 15 percent of the employees in America's elementary and high schools. Dinesh D'Souza points out that half of black professional males and two-thirds of black professional females work for some agency of government. But the same government programs that have provided some black Americans with middle-class employment have thrust poor blacks ever more deeply into poverty. Job security for teachers and principals helps the black middle class, but it makes it virtually impossible for anyone to do anything about the low quality of education meted out to the black poor. Washington's Marion Barry employs 43,000 people, virtually all of them black—but he pays their salaries with crushing tax rates that have expelled productive enterprise from the District of Columbia and thus made it extraordinarily difficult for everyone else in the District to find work.

It's quite remarkable how the failure of past government policies to improve the lot of black America has convinced Wicker that those policies need to be pursued more zealously than ever. And the only explanation that Wicker can see for the reluctance of non-black America to fund ever more lavish public benefits and ever more stringent racial preferences is selfishness and prejudice. Integration, he claims, has "failed nationally because too few white Americans wanted it or were willing to sacrifice for it."

So what should be done now? In his introduction, Wicker proposes the formation of a new political party to represent black interests. It's an astonishing idea, an amazing reminder of how insulated from political reality liberals of Wicker's generation have become. Back in 1970, when few liberals questioned the permanence of Democratic electoral dominance, it might have been vaguely plausible that a third-party threat would pull national politics to the left. But in 1996? Why not cut out the middle man and simply vote Republican in the first place?

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Anyway, is it really true that there are such things as "black interests" any longer? Are the interests of black teachers really more like those of their black students than like those of white teachers? Are Vernon Jordan's interests really the same as those of the woman who mops his floors?

For that matter, is it really true—as Wicker takes for granted throughout his book—that whites and blacks can still usefully be seen as two homogenous groups, one the dominant majority and the other the subordinated minority? Is it not sometimes true, as the Supreme Court recognized when it struck down Richmond, Va.'s racial set-asides, that blacks can themselves form a dominant local majority just as capable as any white majority of twisting the rules to favor their own? Is it not becoming truer and truer that whites, now 75 percent of the American population and falling, are increasingly a subgroup of the population like any other—a subgroup whose poorer members are becoming nearly as prone to crime, illegitimacy, and academic failure as the black underclass?

Maybe it's time to retire white guilt and black militancy and start from zero. Middle-class whites and middle-class blacks are only two of the groups that collectively compose America's multiethnic society. White hegemony is gone, or going. In the complex society of the future, it will seem absurd that blacks should enjoy hiring preferences not only ahead of whites, but Filipinos, Mexicans, Arabs, and Sri Lankans as well. On the other hand, the direction in which America is now proceeding—toward rules that add Filipinos, Mexicans, Arabs, and Sri Lankans to the list of those to be hired ahead of whites—is so shockingly unjust that it begs for backlash. A multiethnic society must base itself on the principles of equal justice and formal legal neutrality. And unfortunately, those are the principles that American liberals, in their pursuit of racial parity, have long since jettisoned. If ever there were a "tragic failure" in American life, that is it. ♦

Books

Bawer Beyond Belief

By J. Bottum

When you read an essay that begins, "I am an Orthodox rabbi and gay," what can you say? I mean, this is not like, "I am a Trappist monk who snorkels." We have passed beyond the merely improbable to a world where language is capable of statements like, "I am a vegetarian butcher." It's not so much impossible as meaningless—or meaningful only once words have divorced their definitions and begun to cruise the back alleys, looking for abuse.

To read the essays gathered in Bruce Bawer's new anthology, *Beyond Queer: Challenging Gay Left Orthodoxy* (Free Press, 325 pages, $25), is to experience, again and again, this sense of language broken loose, words unmoored from meaning. In 1993, Bawer—a successful critic, poet, and columnist—published *A Place at the Table*, a book-length attempt to convince conservatives both that homosexuals naturally belong on the Right and that only their unnatural rejection by conservatives has pushed them into the embrace of the radical Left. Similar arguments had been made before, notably in a 1989 *New Republic* essay, "Here Comes the Groom: A (Conservative) Case for Gay Marriage," in which Andrew Sullivan claimed, "To be gay and to be bourgeois no longer seems such an absurd proposition."

One had the sense, however, that Sullivan didn't entirely believe it. There was and is an air of the disingenuous about Sullivan's argument, a feeling that he was merely floating a trial balloon for consolidating 1970s homosexual gains in a climate changed by AIDS and what in 1989 looked like endless Republican primacy. One heard less talk in the mainstream press of the gay bourgeoisie immediately after President Clinton's election in 1992, only to have it break out again after the Republicans captured Congress in 1994.

Bruce Bawer's problem is that he actually did, and does, believe it. At the end of his 1995 book on homosexual politics, *Virtually Normal*, Sullivan tipped his hand with a few sentences admitting that there is something finally and perpetually countercultural about homosexuality (though in recent debates with William Bennett he has claimed he didn't really mean it). But in his book, Bawer argued that male homosexuals are really just the boys next door, guys who just happen to like guys and want nothing more than to take out the garbage, pick up the paper, and kiss each other goodbye before their morning commutes to the office. If conservatives would only open their arms, understanding that gays are

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by nature deeply middle-class creatures, they would see less of the ACT-UP sort of demonstrations that so offend them—and the whole homosexual issue would disappear, as the radical Left turned away in disgust and sought other groups to manipulate in the war against bourgeois society.

Rejected by the conservative press for proposing an absurd idea of conservatism and scorned by the homosexual press for proposing a craven notion of homosexuality, *A Place at the Table* managed to convince no one of Bruce Bawer's vision of the gay bourgeois—no one, that is, except Bawer himself and a Chicago columnist named Paul Varnell. Between the two of them, they are the authors of nearly half the forty essays collected in *Beyond Queer*.

Bawer and Varnell are at least right that leftism is the orthodox politics of gays and lesbians, rigidly enforced, and that homosexuality itself may be something of a stalking horse for radicals. The current fight for same-sex marriage, American University law professor Nancy D. Polikoff recently bemoaned, is a betrayal of homosexuality's revolutionary challenge to the whole idea of marriage. Homosexuality, she declares, "does not place a monogamous relationship with one partner at the pinnacle of all human relationships." Bawer and Varnell are even right that there is real danger for homosexuals in linking their fate too closely to the radical politics that has been, outside the universities, steadily rejected by American culture since the early 1970s.

But what alternative does the gay bourgeois really pose to the radical homosexual? At last, conservatives and homosexual activists alike are right to refuse Bawer's lonely third way. What the authors of the essays in *Beyond Queer* typically understand as conservatism is a kind of sexualized libertarianism, with Barry Goldwater, Ross Perot, and Harvey Milk raised up as the true conservative heroes. What they typically understand as homosexuality is a middle-class sexual pattern whose deviance from the suburban norm is of social significance only because misguided bigots keep insisting upon the wrong and inessential components of traditional bourgeois life.

The fact that this is not quite what anyone else, right or left, means by either conservatism or homosexuality does not necessarily invalidate the analysis of Bawer and Varnell. Their real incoherence emerges only when the essayists in *Beyond Queer* turn to the churches and the family, the fundamental institutions conservatives traditionally pose against the power of the state.

There are certainly Reform synagogues that would accept the gay rabbi who criticizes Orthodox Judaism's strict interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, just as there are several Christian sects (like Bruce Bawer's own Episcopal church) that would welcome the angry young Jesuit who denounces in *Beyond Queer* the Roman Catholic reading of natural law. So too there are domestic arrangements other than suburban, middle-class marriage ("Ozzie and Harry," as one radical activist mocked) available to homosexuals.

Tolerance for other voices, other rooms, however, is not what the proponents of the "Third Way" desire. There runs through all the essays in Bawer's collection a deep envy of what is imagined to be the rightness, simplicity, and unselfconsciousness of traditional forms of religious and social life—a constant plaint at being unfairly excluded from a magic circle in which error, complexity, and uneasiness all disappear. The institutions that already accept practicing homosexuals seem like failures to Bawer because homosexuals have joined them and yet have discovered that life is not thereby made suddenly and utterly right.

Perhaps this is so because religious and social institutions accept homosexuality only in the midst of such general and radical change that all their traditional possibilities for happiness coincidentally disappear at the same time. Or perhaps it is so because homosexuals—whether by nature or by the ill effects of a presently homophobic society—are simply incapable of being happy. But I think the real explanation for the unhappiness of the essayists in *Beyond Queer* is a failure to understand the internal logic of the forms of life to which they demand admittance.

Dogmatic religion and conventional marriage are disciplines, offering the possibility (though not the promise) of happiness, but requiring in return the assumption of particular duties and the surrender of particular behaviors. They acquire their gravity in part by the accumulation of human experience in them over the ages, and in part by the constant belief that they are divinely ordained and thus more than human.

When the radical lesbian activist Donna Minkowitz declares, "We don't want a place at the table—we want to turn the table over," she manifests a certain realistic consistency. But what Bawer and his fellows want is the tradition without the discipline, the gravity of dogmatic religion and conventional marriage without the duties and surrenders that create gravity. They want, in other words, a reformation of language to purchase for them the fruits that require a reformation of life. The imitation with which they end up may no longer be forbidden by our culture, but by its nature it remains disappointing and sour. ♦

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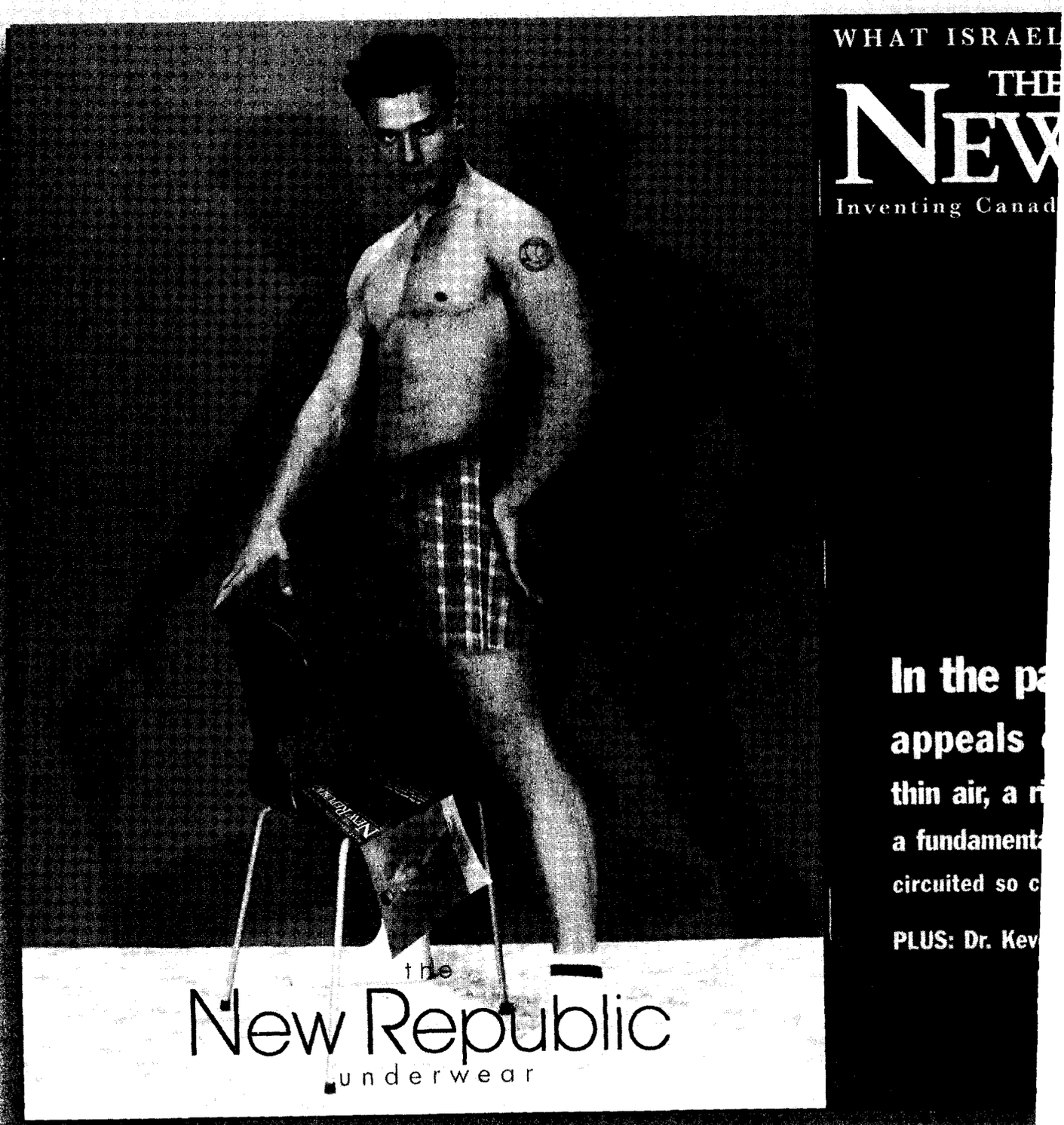

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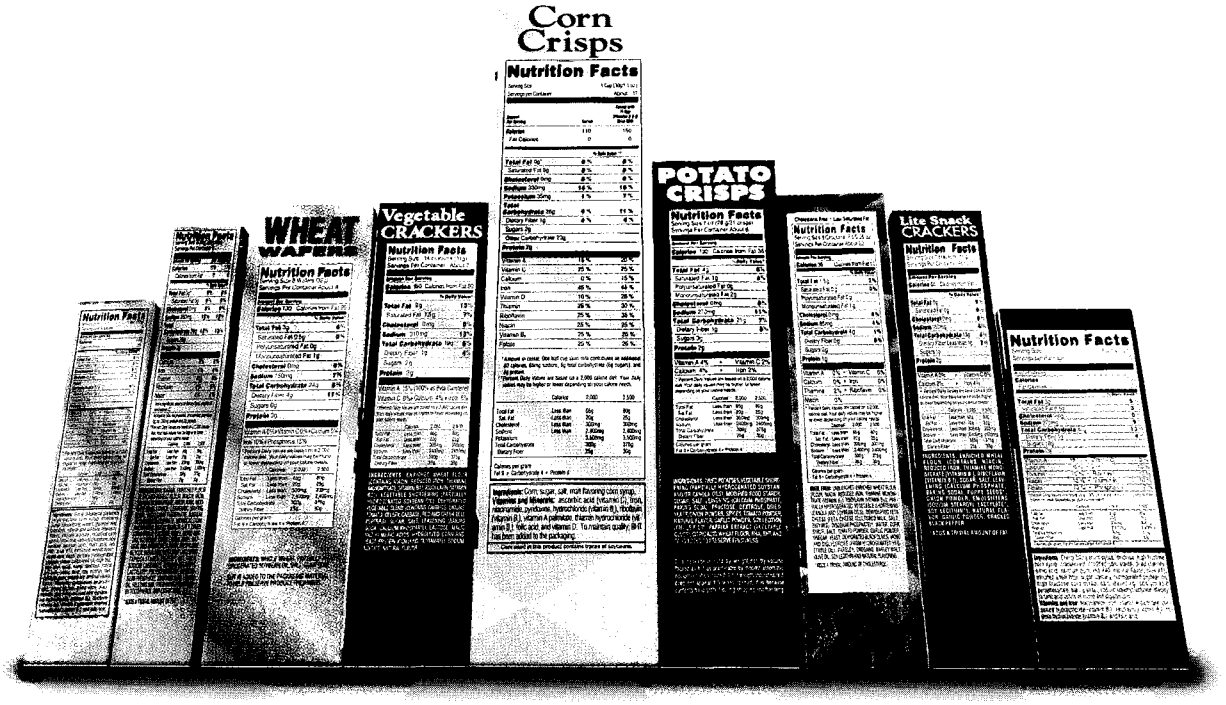

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